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IBM PC, CD ROM, Mac, Amiga

Issue 24 November 1992
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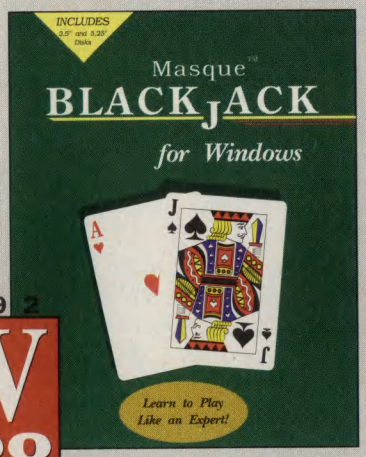
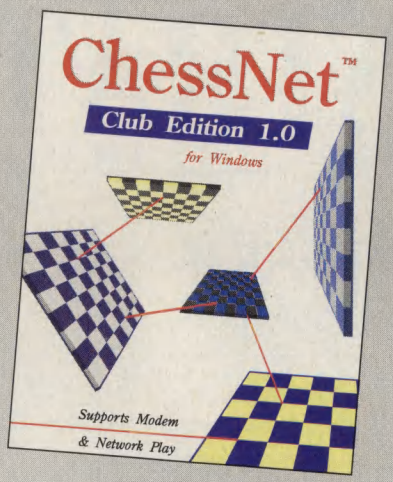


1992 WIN 100 WINDOWS MAGAZINE ANNUAL WIN AWARD



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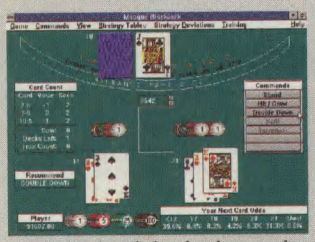
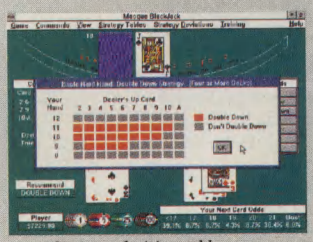


Split hand with hand values, card count, odds calculations and strategy recommendation windows displayed.



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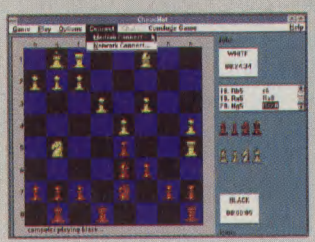
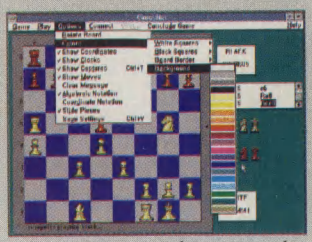


Play against the computer or against friends via modem or network.



The options menu shows some of the many game features.

Note: All screen displays are from Windows versions at VGA resolution.

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COMPUTER GAMES STRATEGY PLUS

Number 24
November 1992

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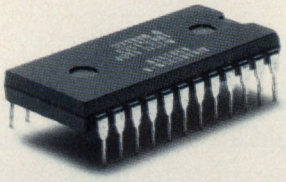

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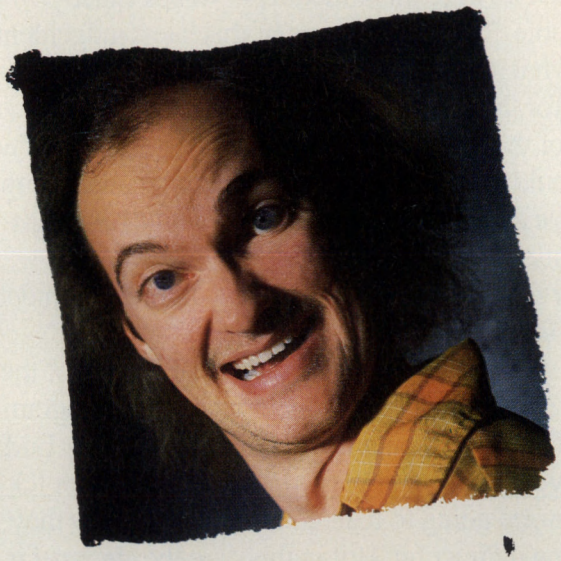

this one wants to rip your lungs out.

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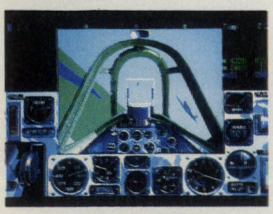

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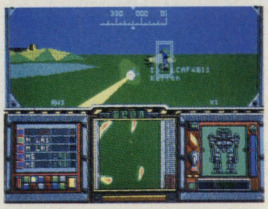

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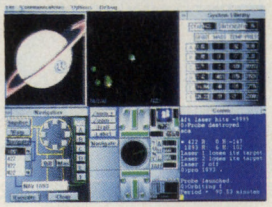

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Reversal of fortune

In what is already being described as a 'landmark decision', the Ninth US Circuit Court of Appeal in San Francisco upheld the appeal of Accolade against a ruling prohibiting them from manufacturing games for the Sega Genesis without a licence.

Although a written judgement is still to be completed (at the time of going to press), the court advised that Accolade be allowed to start shipping their games immediately (the lower court had placed an embargo on Accolade's Sega games).

The case is a seen as a classic example of 'reverse engineering', a process whereby developers probe deep into hardware hearts to find out what generates the beat. Once the secret is discovered then programmers can program willy-nilly without acquiring a licence from the hardware manufacturers. This is exactly what happened in the Accolade/Sega rumble. The implications of this latest judgement are potentially enormous, though 'what it all means' will not become clear until the appeals court states the reasons for the judgement.

What *could* happen is that some of the bigger software houses currently producing games under license for Sega could decide to 'go it alone'. For smaller companies it's probably not worth the hassle as Sega provide full distribution, amongst other things, for officially licensed titles. At the time of writing most software houses are keeping mum about their feelings until they see the written judgement. Sega say they are 'disappointed' by the verdict. I bet.

So what are the rights and the wrongs of this case? To get a clear picture of the Sega attitude, imagine say, IBM, insisting that any developer wishing to program for their machine (or a clone thereof) must first acquire a license from them. Ludicrous, right? But this is what Sega were insisting and getting. The same goes for Nintendo and one wonders how *they* are going to react to all this. Normally they would smirk at their arch rivals taking a direct hit. But in this case the shrapnel is likely to be flying their way pretty soon.

Sega's argument in all this is to maintain that allowing unrestricted access to their hallowed machine would allow a competitor to take a 'free ride' on their work. Frankly, this argument is hard to buy. This would be like Sony complaining that ABC has got a nerve showing programs on *their* TV sets without making paying them a fee. If Accolade were manufacturing Genesis clones then Sega would certainly have a case. But Accolade are a software company, while Sega's stock-in-trade is hardware. Sega's game was total control. This is also known as a monopoly.

The implications of the court's decision extend way beyond the leisure software business. Even *The Wall Street Journal* reported on the case at length. In their article, Raymond Nimmer, a professor specialising in computer law, commented on the recent judgement: 'This really is one of the most significant rulings. Reverse engineering has been a major part of many areas of product development in this country'.

Accolade's motive in pursuing their particular strategy, as befits a commercial concern, was financial rather than any lofty concerns about freedom of knowledge. Certainly it was a high risk policy for if they had lost this case it was hard to see how they could have carried on. But justice has been done. The good ship Accolade has survived after choosing the stormiest of routes. Now may it prosper. ❑

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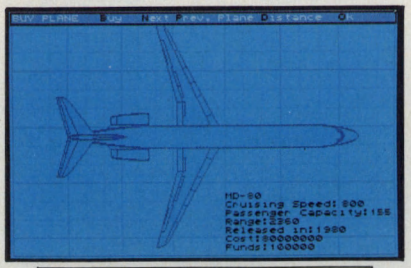
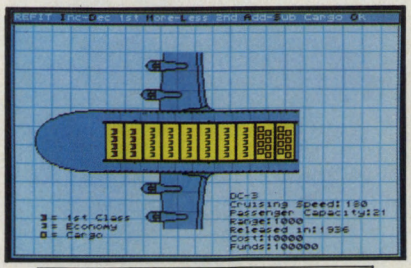
- Develop your own global route network



- Buy the latest planes as new technology becomes available.



- You decide how to fit out all your planes.

Air Bucks is your chance to build an airline- it won't be easy, but if you make it the rewards are huge! Start with $100,000 and a DC3 in 1946, at the start of the air travel boom. Decide which places to fly to, where to use as a hub, when to buy new planes and which ones to buy. New planes become available over time, from a DC9 to Boeing's 747! But beware just because a plane is new does not mean it is right for you. You must also find the cash to pay for it; and planes don't come cheap! You are sure to need the help of your friendly bank sooner or later, or even to sell shares!

AIR BUCKS

- *1 to 4 players (human or computer)*
- *Sophisticated economic model.*
- *World map can change every game.*
- *Fleet size larger than you're likely to ever need!*
- *Detailed Graph Chart and reprints*
- *Hi-Resolution Graphics supported (IBM PC).*
- *Easy to use point 'n' click interface.*

- You can even set the luxury level on your fleet.

- There's money to be made in cargo as well as passenger flights.

- Will you beat your rivals to this and other targets.

YOUR RUNWAY TO SUCCESS!

Impressions

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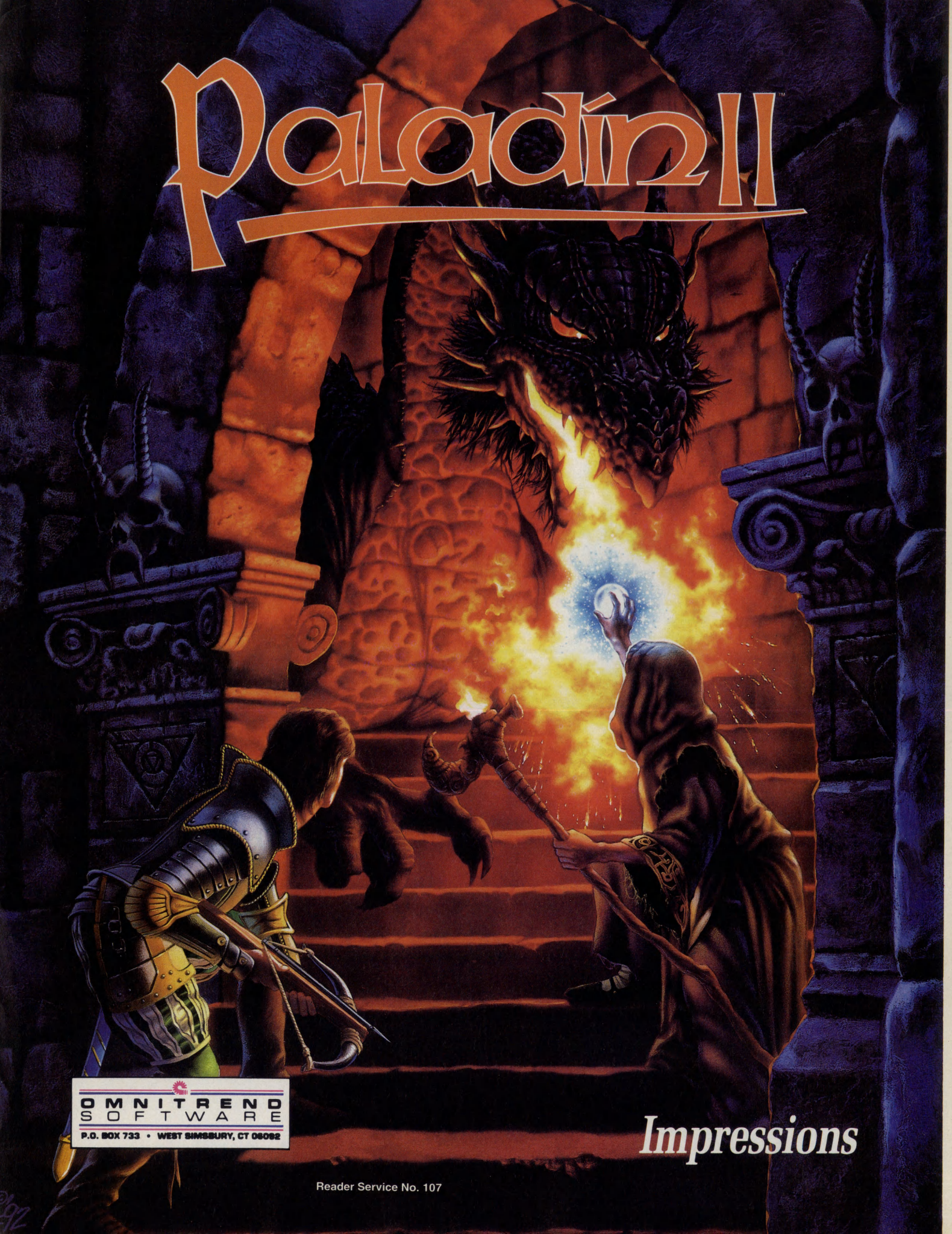

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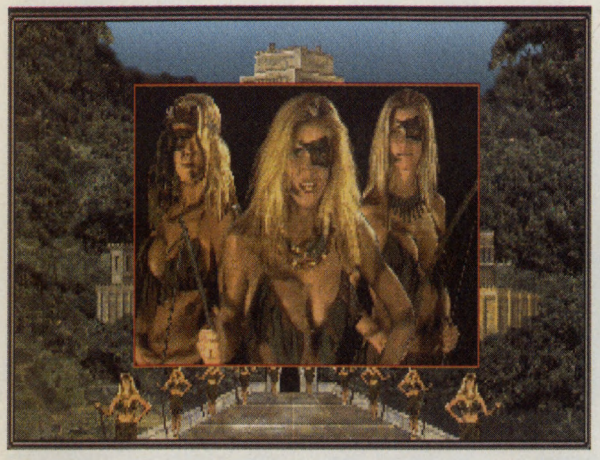


Access Go Amazon

Access' last adventure game invited players to chill out amidst the cold comfort of Mars, but their next one will be located in the steamy setting of the Amazon. **Amazon: Guardians of Eden** takes its story from the B-movies and Saturday matinees of the fifties. Older readers might recall the *Nyoka the Jungle Girl* comics which featured the eponymous heroine swinging around the vines in khaki hot pants and (*that's enough of that - Ed).* Er, anyway, Access take this genre and throw it into the multimedia melting pot; speech, spectacular graphics, and scantily clad male and female lovelies abound. One rather unique feature is a varying difficulty level which may be set at the outset and which determines the explicitness of the hints. This is partly in response to criticisms of **Martian Memorandum** that it was 'too easy'. **Amazon: Gardens of Eden** was due to be released in October, but a January '93 release now looks more likely.

From the sweat laden swamps of the Amazon we move to the green fields of golf. To **Links**, in fact. Access' next super VGA course for **Links 386 Pro** was to have been the Mauna Kea course in Hawaii but problems have arisen over the availability of a topographical map of the course, a similar problem has also been encountered with the Bamff course in Canada. Access have recently finished shooting a course in Ireland so that could well be the next new course if the aforementioned difficulties are not resolved.

Changing Impressions

Now based in Connecticut as well as the UK, Impressions are to release 'improved' PC versions of their games for the US market, though these will also be available as upgrades in the UK. The first game to get such treatment is **Strike Force Commander** (reviewed issue #15). This even gets a new name; it's now called **Air Force Commander**. The PC version will include a thicker manual printed on posher paper. The 'save' problem that occurred on certain machines using a Microsoft mouse driver has been fixed, as has the problem with the Lynx helicopter missiles. Another game undergoing a name change is **Samurai** (reviewed issue #20) which now becomes known as **Conquest of Japan**. Impression are keen to state that this game runs in VGA as well as high res EGA, though graphic modes cannot be switched during the game.

For their new version of **Air Bucks**, Impressions promise everything except a trip on Concorde, so fasten your seat belts and hear this: enhanced AI, marketing, reliability, staff morale, and the age of planes will all be factored in. The interface is also being improved, particularly when entering ticket prices. There will now be more graphics screens including animation.

Players will now be able to buy shares in their competitors airlines - owning more than 50% of the shares in an airline will give players complete control of that airline. Impressions are also to release **Paladin 2** which will include 20 scenarios as well as a scenario builder.

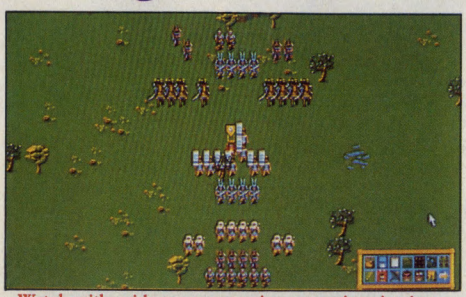
Accolade on the Ballpark

Accolade announce two add-on disks for **Hardball III** which was reviewed in issue #21. The first of these will be **Hardball III MLBPA Players Disk** which will feature real players from all 26 Major League teams as well as including faces to go with the stats. The latter will be based on mid-season '92 figures.

The second disk will the **Big League Ballpark Disk** which contains the remaining 18 stadiums from both the American and National baseball leagues. Additional season schedules, including one for expansion teams, are also included. Each of the stadiums are rendered in 256 color VGA graphics. Accolade are currently working on a hockey game but that is some way off. Their next release is likely to be **Star Control II**.

DON'T GET MAD...

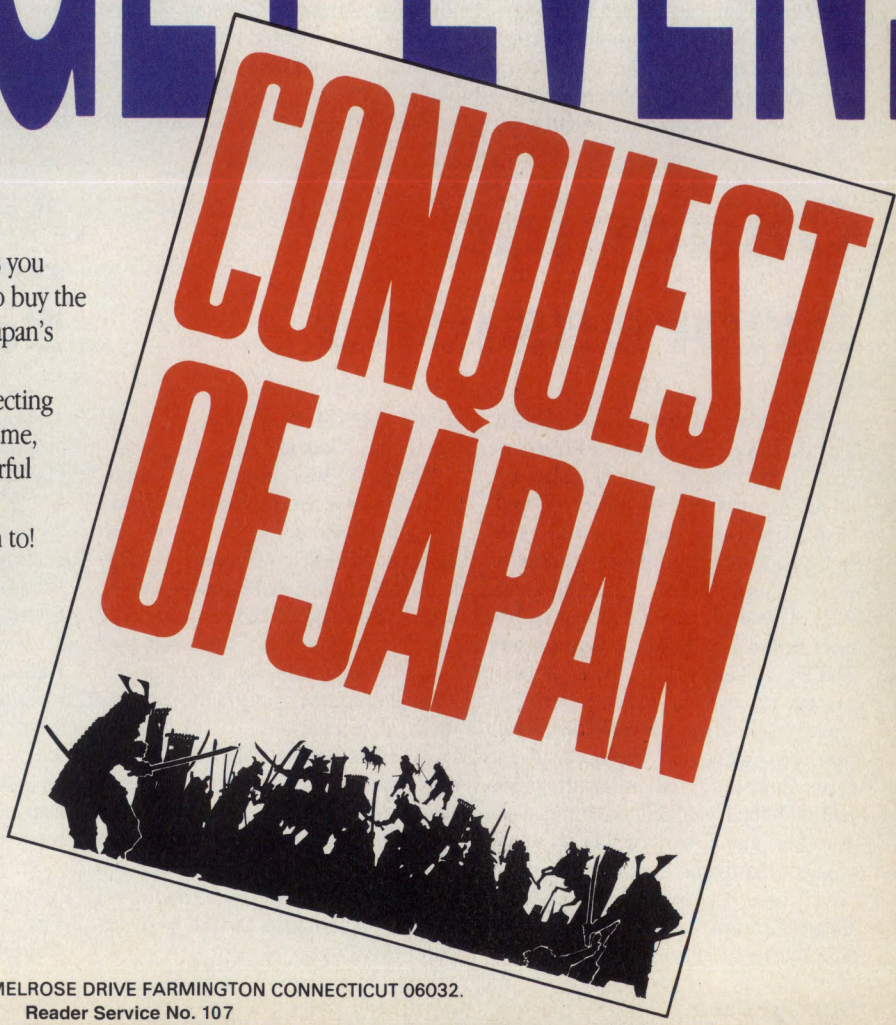
...GET EVEN!



Watch with pride as your warriors move into intricate formations (HIGH RESOLUTION mode IBM PC only).

The game is full of sumptuous graphics.

CONQUEST OF JAPAN



Your Chance to get your own back! Conquest of Japan gives you five cities, each with money to hire armies -it is up to you to buy the right soldiers, and direct your armies to conquer Honshu, Japan's main island! In a truly epic production, you are both the general,planning campaigns, and the army commander, directing troops within each battle. All battles are played out in real time, with your soldiers moving into formation in fantastic, colourful animation! You can become as involved as you like -from watching progress, to instructing individual men if you wish to! You can even choose to play each battle in Hi Res (386/25 machines or better reccommended) or faster Low Res.

FEATURES:

- *Miniature-style war simulation*
- *Cities located differently each game*
- *Choice of authentic troop formations*
- *Simple to play*
- *Your chance to conquer Japan!!*

Impressions IMPRESSIONS SOFTWARE INC. 7 MELROSE DRIVE FARMINGTON CONNECTICUT 06032.

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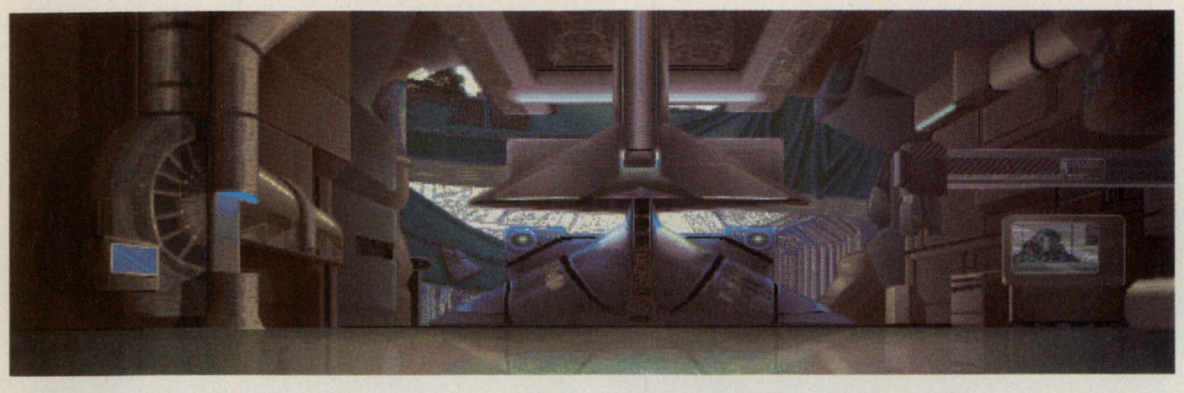


Cyberace: Syd Mead's musings (opposite and below) make for the line

Cyberace close to a finish

Following the success of the *Alien* inspired **Dark Seed**, the next game from Cyberdreams will be **Cyberace**. Just as the former game employed the talents of designer H R Giger, so **Cyberace** will have *Blade Runner* designer Syd Mead on board.

The game is modestly described as a 'futuristic racing simulation'.

The difference between this and conventional racing sims, apart from the chic design, is that players can interact with other characters en route.

Such interactions promise more than simply asking how far it is to Uranus. Players can make deals, buy weapons, and even have a bit on the side ('have a few romances', as the blurb coyly puts it).

So in other words, the racing aspect of the game is placed in a wider context. Cyberdreams say that **Cyberace** should be heading for your PC in the first quarter of '93.

Pinball wizardry

Just as you thought you'd seen it all, along comes **Tristan: Solid State Pinball** from Amtex Software. Quite apart from the strangeness of the concept, the first question that pops into one's minds: why **Tristan**? Answer: haven't a clue, mate. The manual provides a potted history of the roots of the game and even gives a namecheck to *Tommy*, the world's worst movie, but no sign of 'Tristan'. The program, as one would expect, is a simulation of the popular arcade game and comes with sound support and flashing colors in super VGA. Just don't start nudging the monitor.

Quelle horreur!

Fab French company Infogrames are to release **Screams in the Dark**, a new **Call of Cthulu** inspired game. The program is totally polyester driven with a variety of interesting *Cartier-Bresson* camera angles. An arcade/adventure with a difference, **Screams** is based in the old manor house, *Le Deux Maggot*, where the resident intellectual has allegedly topped himself. The player chooses one of two characters to find out if the suicide was really the cause of death; could it have been those iffy looking *escargot*, or did he accidentally overdose on existentialism?

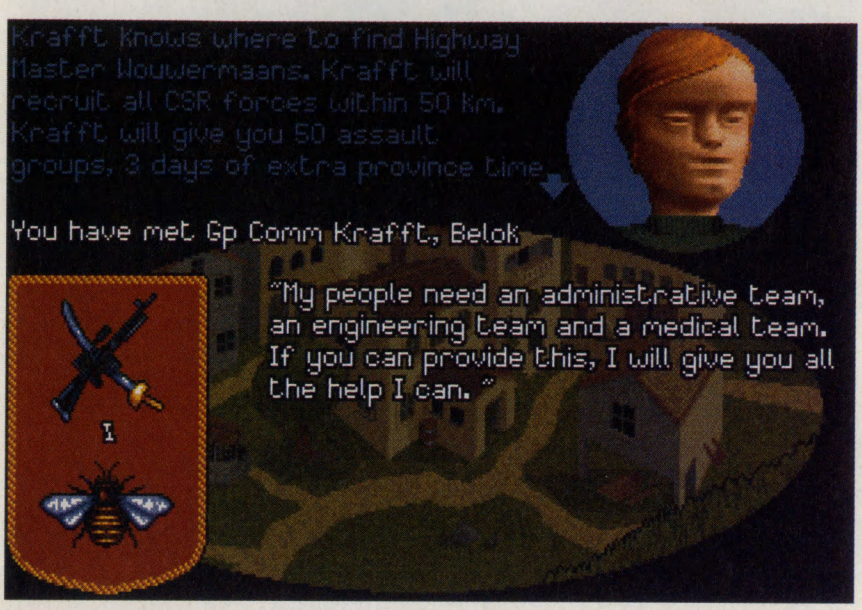
Coffee break studs

Tired of losing your shirt at poker parties? Relax. Now you get taken to the metaphorical cleaners during coffee break. This is entirely due to Villa Crespo's new Coffee Break series. Essentially the series comprises budget priced versions of games like **Amarillo Slim's 7 Card Stud** and **Dr Wong's Jacks & Video Poker**. Also included is **Dr Thorp's Mini Blackjack**, an abridged version of the full price game; **On Target** is a nightime artillery game featuring battling battleships under the stars. And finally it's back to the gambling den with **Casino Craps**.

Ad Lib Play a New Song

Following their temporary demise, Ad Lib, makers of the famous soundcard are back. At the time of going to press they were all set to release their long awaited Ad Lib Gold 1000 card. When installed, this provides an aural upgrade to the multimedia standard laid down by Microprose and will feature the new Magic Chipset from Yamaha. Optional add-on modules will include modules for surround sound, a telephone answering machine, and a SCSI interface for CD ROM. But will it make toast?

ASHES OF EMPIRE


Krafft knows where to find Highway Master Wouwermaans. Krafft will recruit all CSR forces within 50 km. Krafft will give you 50 assault groups, 3 days of extra province time.
You have met Gp Comm Krafft, Belok
"My people need an administrative team, an engineering team and a medical team. If you can provide this, I will give you all the help I can."

Design notes by Mike Singleton and Hugh Battersby

Ashes of Empire is a mixture of grand strategy, role-playing and fast moving action. The player is conveyed to a parallel existence, not too distant from today's world. It's January 1st, 1993. Two power blocks confront one another at the conclusion of a cold war. The United Community (UC), a prosperous amalgamation of free democratic states, faces formal rival the Confederation of Syndicalist Republics (CSR), a totalitarian empire consisting of five disparate republics made up of 40 crumbling provinces. With its economy in ruins, its social fabric torn asunder by inter-ethnic hatred and rivalry, the CSR. threatens to culminate in nuclear civil war, unless the UC can impose a more peaceful solution.

Ethnic ethos

The challenge offered to the player is to don the role of a senior UC peace-keeping officer who must implement the community's pacification programme of construction, troop disarmament, demolition and ethnic harmony, thus bringing peace to each nation until finally the entire empire is pacified.

In essence, the player moves through the landscape gathering and expending strategic resources (people, time, ammunition, fuel, vehicles and airlifts). Once gathered, the computer takes over and combines these resources to provide the player with various options. To maintain the pace of game play, icons indicate resource capability status whilst the landscape is selected. Hence, most of the game can be played without resorting to the main resource monitoring screens which are only required for planning. There are approximately 9000 buildings in **Ashes**, each of which has an individual interactive character offering a particular strategic resource and/or commodities.

The game is specifically an exploration of the power and forces which tear apart and re-form during the disintegration of empire. The prime component of revolution is, of course, people. 'Ordinary' people will provide routine information, strategic resources and commodities. There are two ways in which they can be recruited: by bartering commodities with them or by persuading them. To avoid frustration, recruiting is attained by selecting appropriate icons, hence, although the process is complex it is swift to implement.

Syndicated revolution

Extraordinary characters represent the intelligentsia of the five syndicalist republics (Ossia, Servonia, Ruzakhstan, Moldenia and Belokraine). Each nationality is part of a hierarchy headed by a president with four separate divisions controlled by governors who, in turn, have 32 subordinates, each belonging to one of four professions. To simulate ethnic rivalry, approximately one quarter of the population of each nation is made up of nationals from another. The mix of these nationalities within the provinces of a given republic has been carefully calculated so that it varies from province to province.

The professional characters move from one building type to another dependent on their profession, so the player always knows that by going to a hospital, he stands a high probability of finding a surgeon or being told the whereabouts of one. The four professions are: military, medical, engineering and administrative. Obviously, dependent on the tasks set for the player at the start of a province, certain types of profession are in greater demand in certain provinces.

Professional characters can be used in two ways: they can either be stored in teams or be allowed to provide large quantities of resources, commodities and, more importantly, assistance. The player is faced with the dilemma of making an immediate choice as to how to use the recruited professional most effectively. In addition to all the other assistance the professional provides, they give votes and in each province, the player must acquire a specially calculated number of these to ensure the success of the ethnic harmony programme, in other words, a simulation of achieving democratic rule.

Discount recruits

When a member of the professional classes is encountered, a shield representing that character's nationality, occupation and factional obedience is displayed. One of the merits of having a hierarchical system is to allow the player to recruit characters at a discount. In addition, because that character's subordinates will be spread across republican and inter-republican boundaries, as the game proceeds, the player will come across characters willing to provide assistance on entering new provinces or new republics.

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8 ship types; 4 maps

5 competing nations

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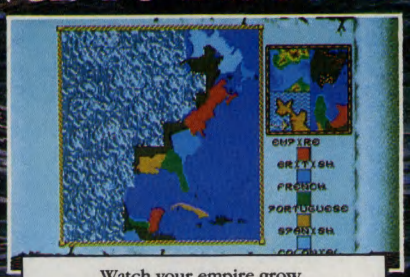
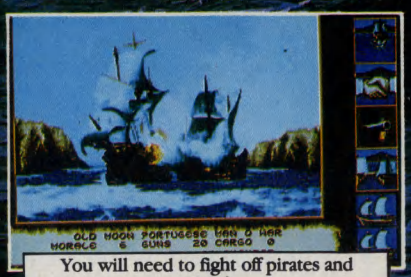


Watch your empire grow.



You will need to fight off pirates and more!

Impressions

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Reader Service No. 107

The discerning player will also find that, dependent on nationality and location, certain national characters will give their help more freely than others. Without giving too much away, the Ossians, who are the dominant power, are always harder to recruit than other nationalities. In Servonia, where there is a border dispute between the Servonians and the Moldenes, the Servonians are easier to recruit. Ruzhaks tend to be the easiest nationality to recruit.

Flames of Freedom

Time is of the essence in this game. If the player fails to achieve the given aims in the amount of time set, two sets of penalty will be incurred. Forest fires will be ignited by reactionary forces, thus diminishing the resource bonuses available to the player on successful completion of the province. A number of game days is allocated in which a republic must be pacified. If this is not achieved then at the expiry of that period, there is an increasing probability of a limited nuclear civil war. Dependent on the player's luck or lack of it, a devastating nuclear explosion will take place. This process will be repeated at an increasing frequency until a general nuclear civil war ensues, whereupon the player loses the game. Of course, the balancing element is that the player gains extra time within a province by acquiring certain buildings or recruiting certain people. Likewise, additional time within a republic by succeeding in each province.

The mere ignition of forest fires does not spell total disaster as the player can acquire fire-fighting teams, and, once certain skills have been acquired, anticipate the path that the fires will follow when spreading from forest to forest. Even in the aftermath of a nuclear strike, certain buildings which have been designated bomb-proof can be used by the player to meet any surviving professional characters. The result of such checks and balances is that the less experienced player has a reasonable chance of recovery whilst the more proficient will find that the pace of the game accelerates at a rate proportionate to the success encountered.

Fighting CSR units is facilitated by the ability to call in strike assistance. This is done through keyboard control and the player actually watches his own allied units appear on screen attacking the opposing CSR forces. Once allied units are in attendance, the pace of the action accelerates considerably. The game rationale behind this is that, as the field-officer becomes more proficient, extra resources are granted by the high command at the officer's request.

Ashes of Empire was designed to simulate the effects of the end of empire. It was two years in the making despite the fact that present day events appear to be emulating its pattern. It is not a game that proposes solutions to the dilemmas posed by such events. In a fictional environment, **Ashes of Empire** allows the player to explore the complex interplay of political, economic and military factors than can mean the difference between war and peace. ❑

__Ashes of Empire__ will be published by Mirage in the UK. A US publisher will be announced shortly

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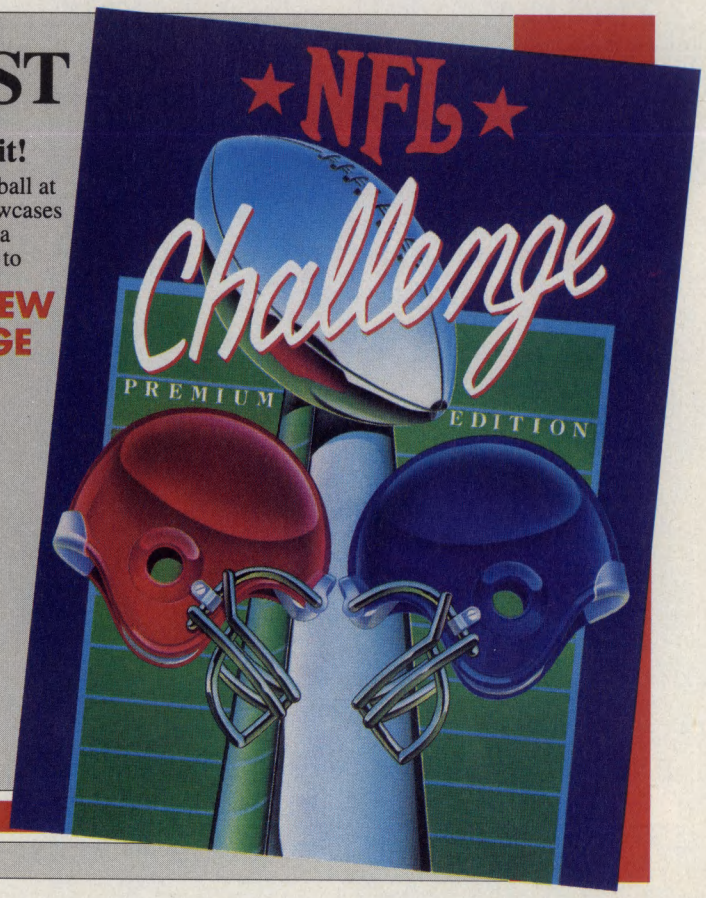

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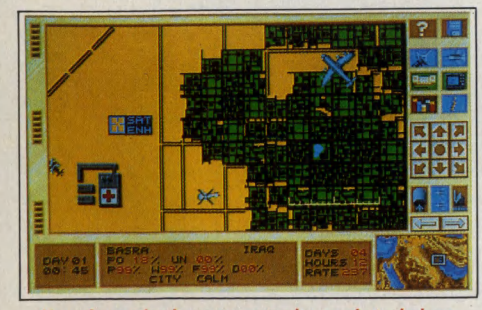

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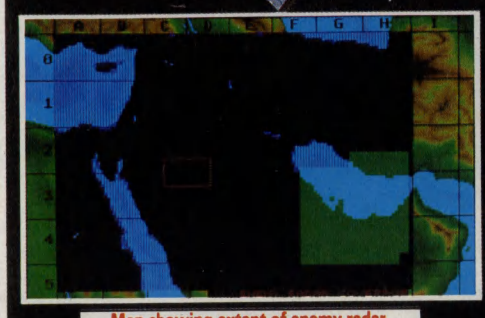
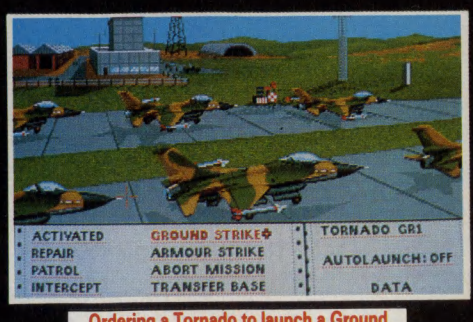


Map showing extent of enemy radar coverage



Ordering a Tornado to launch a Ground Attack mission is as easy as point and click!

Impressions

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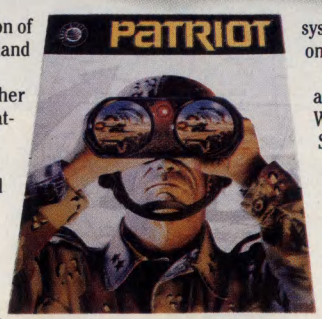

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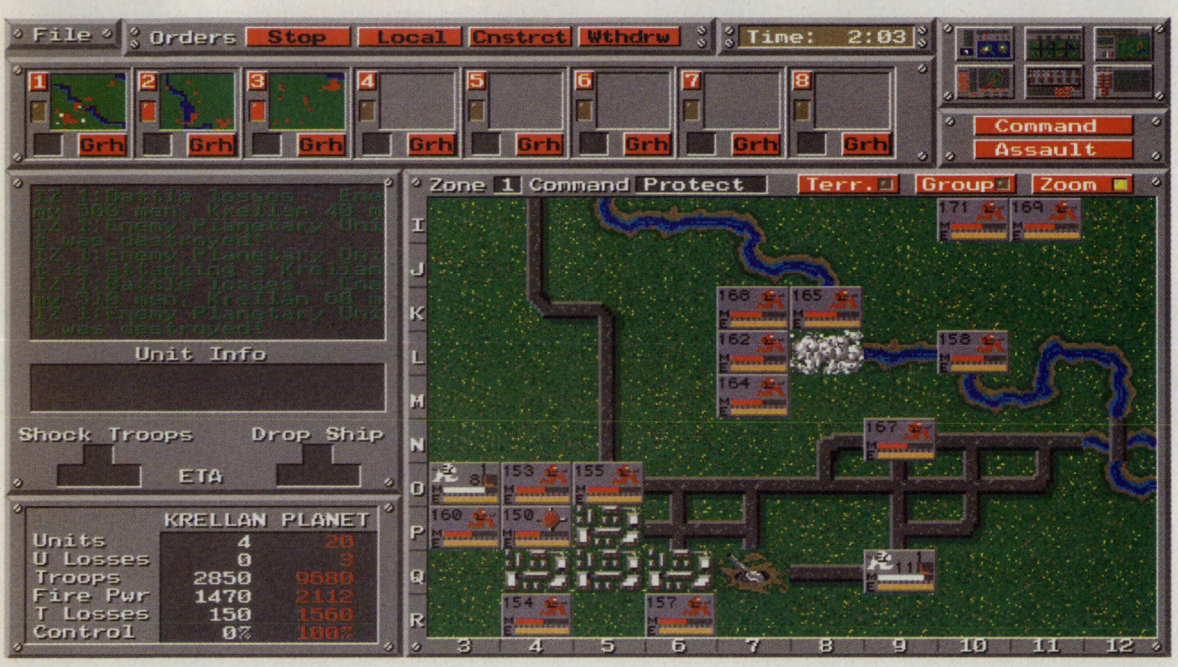
THREE-SIXTY

Reader Service No. 65

LEGIONS OF KRELLA



Cross **Empire** with **Star Fleet** and what do you get? With a bit of luck, **Legions of Krella**. This is a new game from **Star Fleet** designer, Trevor Sorensen, helped along by **Empire** programmer, Mark Baldwin. Like its illustrious predecessors, **Legions of Krella** should appeal to all but the most cerebrally challenged gamers.

The player is put in charge of the Krellan forces whose singular aim in life is to defeat the combined might of the United Galatic Alliance. To succeed in this task planets must be raped and pillaged in the manner of yore. The planets consist of various 'zones', within which are cities and factories. The latter produce everyday items like defence phasers and shield generators. Knocking these out cause defensive gaps to appear, enabling the marauders to run amok (ie more rape and pillage).

The game runs in real-time so it's more than likely that the player will have to hop from one zone to another in a frenzy of crisis management. An unusual feature of the game is that the human player is always the attacker. As there is no modem or multi-player option the usefulness of this quickly becomes apparent: computer opponents always play better on defence rather than in the opponent's end zone.

Actual play closely resembles a souped up wargame. Combat modifiers, movement, and the units-as-icons recall the glory days of boardgames, though the look of the game is brand new. Bringing things up-to-date are orbiting satellites performing recon missions, and rotating planets. With the satellites it's not just a question of launching them and hoping for the best; the angle of flight reflects what they actually report while a zoom option allows a closer look at suspicious sightings.

Combat is on a tactical level, though there is a strategic map available for viewing. Air units are present as well as the 'grunts', though their attacks are conducted in background. The various difficulty levels are reflected by technological advancements. These range from Barbarian to Extremely Brainy. The former are as primitive as their name suggests. What's worse is that they are so stupid they don't realise when they're beat. Because they don't have radios or such like they can't say to fellow barbs: 'Hey guys, we're really getting our ass kicked. Let's quit'. They must be beaten to a pulp to gain true awareness. On the smarter levels this is not necessary, though the egg-heads will be much tougher to beat. Mindcraft say the number of planets awaiting human conquest and subsequent rape and pillage is 'endless'. Replay value, therefore, should not be a problem. ❑

Legions of Krella, *published by Mindcraft, should now be available for the PC*

Brian Walker goes star gazing

Empire Deluxe

Design notes by Mark Baldwin and Bob Rakosky

Note: screen shots displayed are 640 x 480 16 color. The game will support 256 colors at the same resolution.

Computer game design! A mysterious world in which mistakes are obvious, but truths are elusive. How does a game get created? Why is there such a mixture in quality from poor to fantastic? We won't answer the above questions directly. However, let us try to look at those questions from the perspective of the design process of our new game, **Empire Deluxe**, created by us to be published by New World Computing. This project is interesting in that it is a complete rewrite of the award winning **Empire** which appeared in 1987 and which is still popular today.

Empire, for the uninitiated, is an extremely addictive strategy game built around the concepts of exploring and conquering a world. Cities are used for building various types of units, and the units are used for exploration, capturing other cities, and engaging in combat with units of the opposing players. Despite having worked on many games, **Empire** has remained our favorite. In **Empire**, there was always a balance of simplicity of rules and richness of play that makes games like Chess and Bridge such classics. Unfortunately advancing technology had put **Empire**, with its 'born in 1987' tag, on the back shelves (if on any shelf at all).

Although withdrawn from publication last year, the widespread respect for this venerable game coupled with our intense personal feelings compelled us not to let it die. So what to do? The problem was solved when New World Computing expressed a strong desire to see a new **Empire**. An agreement was struck, and we were back in the **Empire** design business again. However, even with a budget several times greater than that of the original **Empire**, and 5 years worth of new technology in the industry, we asked ourselves: 'How does one improve on the product?' The following notes are intended to answer this question.

Entertainment value

Playing a game is an interactive experience. The gameplay is the embodiment of this interaction. This is the center from which the entertainment is ultimately received, and from which we needed to design everything else.

The original rules for **Empire** worked well. Any change would risk damaging the delicate balance of gameplay achieved in **Empire**. On the other hand, increasing the richness of the game rules could make the game more interesting. As a result, we decided to actually have *three* different games in **Empire Deluxe**. The Basic game is a simplified version that will allow the new player to easily learn the fundamentals of the game. The Standard game consists of the same unit types and rules of the original game, but with the presentation enhancements and new tools (orders). The Advanced game adds additional unit types (including Infantry, Armor, Fighters, Bombers and Air Fields), terrain types (Forest, River, Rough, and Mountain) and other rules of various natures.

Servile technology

With a whole new generation of computer to design for we really wanted to play with the fancy stuff. Sophisticated graphics and sound capabilities are now commonplace.

Modems have practically become as common as a mouse. Many game players have access to computer networks, both in the wide-area sense of the National (and International) networks like Compuserve and GENie. and in the local-area sense, as found in many of today's business environments. Most MS-DOS computers today have extra memory available.

The key issue is deciding which technologies will enhance the gameplay, and which will only serve to pay homage to the technology itself. We decided to let the user choose: **Empire Deluxe** will not just support one super VGA mode, but will instead support 6 different resolutions from a low of 320x200 to a high of 800 x 600. This allows the user to select that resolution that provides the best compromise of aesthetics and speed for his machine and taste. We also allow the player to change that resolution on the fly.

In addition to the visual display, we are also adding another significant enhancement to the game; the audio experience. Both musical and digital sound effects will be used throughout the game. **Empire Deluxe** will support (almost) all of the major soundboard options available in addition to the internal PC speaker.

Different strokes...

There are many ways a player can communicate with a game: keyboard or mouse, while menus can be selected to give a unit orders, or a pop-up list might work. But here's the key: different people like different methods. One individual may prefer using a mouse and menus, while the next might cringe at such a thought and desire to use the keyboard with hot keys for every action. Our interface allows multiple methods with which to perform every single action. Most are very easy to learn, and we have made on-line help available.

Along the same lines, there are many ways to find opponents for the game: against the computer, or against a friend on the same machine, or play by mail (transferring files), or play by modem. Once the basic methods of communicating among multiple copies of the game running on many machines were mastered, it wasn't much more of an undertaking to support the use of local-area-network (LAN) technology as the communication medium. Playing **Empire Deluxe** on a network with multiple machines will be a lot of fun!

Tedium reliever

We have tried to provide tools in the form of new unit orders to attempt to relieve the more tedious processes. While the original **Empire** provided means of specifying Flight Paths for aircraft, we have expanded that capability to allow for Movement Paths for each of three classifications of units: Land-based units, Air units, and Sea Units. We've also expanded the Patrol order so that the player can place a unit on a multiple-leg patrol path. Another tedium-reliever is the new Explore command, which will cause a unit to seek out and move towards unexplored terrain.

If it ain't broke...

Judging from both the critical and popular responses to the original version of **Empire**, we knew that we had a base design that worked well. Consequently, the fundamental structure of the game is the same. Play is still turn-sequenced, with one player giving and executing orders, followed in turn by the other players doing the same. There are still two or more players trying to control the world's resources.

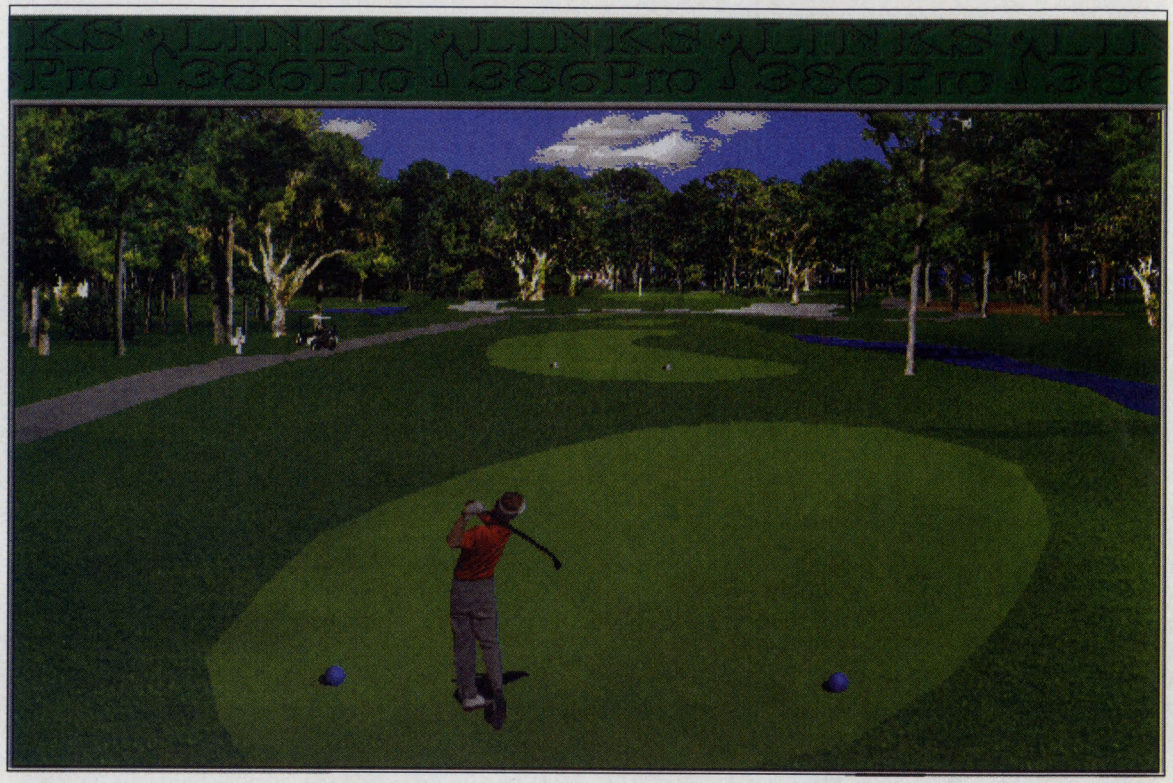
We have retained and improved the built-in map editor. There are now more terrain types, and terrain can be 'painted' using a mouse. The size of the world can be set by the user who also has the option of specifying that the world 'wraps', so there are no longer East-West edges of the world. In addition, the game now supports scenarios where the 'world designer' has specified which cities are already controlled by the players at the outset. The pre-designed scenarios also support initial allocation and placement of units. The map editor also serves as a scenario editor and we trust that there will be scores of scenarios available, created by the legions of enthusiasts for sharing via bulletin boards.

Random worlds can still be selected at the time of game start, but unlike the original game, these are truly random worlds generated at startup time. (The original game merely selected a random map from the list of maps available.) Except in the basic ("Lite") game, the size of these worlds are user-selectable.

That's entertainment

This basic rule that games must provide entertainment can be forgotten in the hustle and bustle of actually designing the game. We try not to let this happen to us, since it is the filter with which all game design decisions should be made. All other goals are secondary to this! How we succeed in fullfilling this basic rule is part guesswork, and part experience. We've spent the last year trying to reach the goal, but only the customers will tell us if we succeed or not. ❑

Bob Rakosky and Mark Baldwin comprise White Wolf Productions. New World Computing will publish ***Empire Deluxe*** *later this year.*



Links 386 Pro: new VESA drivers available

Down the upgrade path

The following bug fixes, patches, and lords know what are available from the following companies, or can be downloaded from various networks

ORIGIN (512 328 5490; UK 0444 831761): **Underworld** bug fix.

SSI (408 737 6800; UK 021 625 3388): **Prophecy of the Shadow** Soundblaster fix. **Dark Queen of Krynn** update patch. **Carrier Strike** v1.1 bug fix.

ACCOLADE (UK 081 877 0880): **Jack Nicklaus Signature Edition** update to fix divide error.

MICROPROSE (301 771 6700; UK 0666 504326): **F117A Nighthawk** v 0.4 upgrade. **Sword of the Samurai** key disk patch. **Global Conquest** v 2.0 update.

THREE SIXTY PACIFIC (408 879 9144; UK 0743 549442): **Harpoon** North Atlantic Battleset update.

MERIT (214 385 2353; UK 0260 299909): **Dark Seed** update version 1.4B.

ACCESS (801 359 2900 UK 021 625 3388): **Links 386 Pro** update the solves various video and play problems. In particular it corrects the video problems for the Boca, Orchid Fahrenheit, Oak and other video cards. It also includes a new VesaLib.exe file. Also available is a new VESA Setup program and VESA Library. It contains some new VESA drivers not included in previous upgrades Specifically, IBM XGA and Western Digital.

MINDCRAFT (310 320 5215 UK 0442 5441: **Siege** version 1.2 update to includes the following: the defenders can now leave castle gate. Various improvements have been made to the AI to speed play and make computer opponent more challenging. Various changes to targeting commands and extended patrol have been made.

INTERPLAY (714 545 9001; UK 0743 549442): Upgrade files for **Bard's Tale Construction Set** Version 1.3. This latest version includes new specials, spells, and options. Also includes improved Sound Blaster support, faster graphics on slower machines, and minor bug fixes. Be sure to look at the READ.ME file; it gives instructions and a list of the changes.

Note: You must be a registered user to use obtain these upgrades, so fill out those registration cards now and tell 'em we sent you.

Microrpose have announced the opening of a (US only) hint line for their games. By dialling 1-900-933-PLAY users can obtain hints on games in six categories: Strategy, Role Playing, Adventure, Simulations, Nintendo, and Sports.

The connect charge is $.95 a minute. Customers will be able to gain information on new releases free of charge by having the call transferred., Likewise, orders may be placed with the Microprose Gift Shop. ❑

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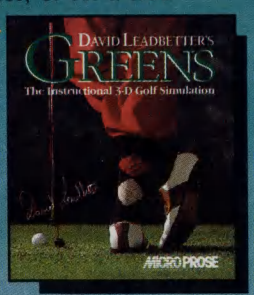

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Might and Magic®

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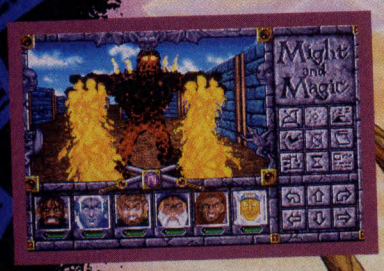

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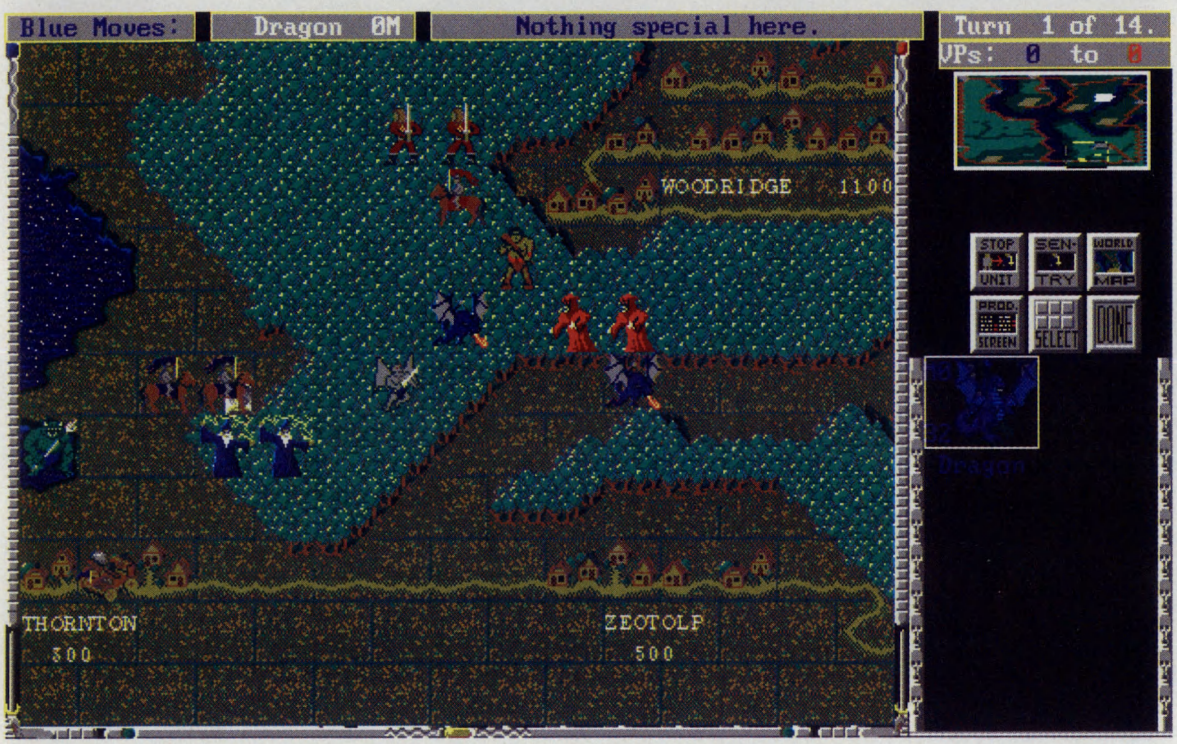
CONQUERED KINGDOMS



Design notes by Bruce Williams Zaccagnino

After the release of **The Lost Admiral** and **The Perfect General** in September, '91, all stops were pulled in the creation of **Conquered Kingdoms**. Our goal at QQP is to create intense games of thought; Games that are both fun, and highly challenging. Rich graphics and animation are just as important.

We missed some of these targets in our first two games. **The Lost Admiral** was a little too difficult and with less than 1992-style graphics. **The Perfect General**, with its clean interface and strong 2-player appeal was a little too easy against the computer opponent.

The concept behind **Conquered Kingdoms** is medieval conquest, a subject potentially rich in strategy and tactics. Units in the 'realistic' game include archers, catapults, cavalry, spys, knights, swordsmen, lancers, and boats, amongst others. A game can be played with just these units. The units in the fantasy game consist of wizards, dragons, gargoyles, rogs, phantoms, ogres, trolls, and so forth. In addition, units from both games can be mixed in together. This is the best way to play. We haggled and debated at great length as to whether to have an 'always hit' combat table or random. It was a tough call, so both options are in.

To make the fantasy units more than just a more powerful basic unit we built in some very exotic fantasy features. Wizards can teleport and bring combat units with them. It can cast a spell to see farther out. It can also cast a devastating fireball. All of these cost mana. Dragons are powerful units that can fly over anything. Phantoms scare the enemy within 3 squares. Rogs can cross water without using a boat.

There are multiple strategic goals: take and hold towns; Take or destroy castles; take and hold resources (gold, wood and coal). These provide a player with thousands of ways to play any given scenario, in addition to the multitude of tactical ploys.

In addition to 9 scenarios and a random map generator, we felt it necessary to include 8 campaign worlds. These worlds consist of counties that are either awarded or conquered by playing the different scenarios. This campaign mode should provide that long play value we are forever searching for.

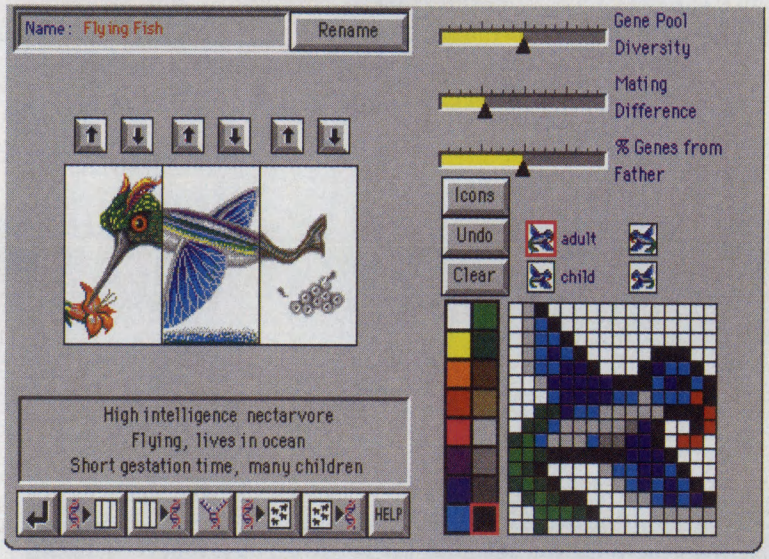
The score histories that have become a hallmark of QQP are in **Conquered Kingdoms** and vastly improved, making for what we feel is our best game yet. ❑

***Conquered Kingdoms** will be released by QQP in late October*

Sim Life

The genetic laboratory

by Peter Szymonik



Published by
Maxis

Designed by
Will Wright

Systems
Mac PC to follow

Notes
Review based on beta version 0.7a9

The folks at Maxis were obviously not content with simulating city life, planetary development, or the wide world of ants, for now we have **Sim Life**, a simulation that explores the evolution of life itself. **SimLife** is a 'software toy' and is very similar to **Sim Earth** in many respects. Where **Sim Earth** let us develop and play with ecological systems affecting a planet, **Sim Life** zeros in on the evolution of life from the basic biological elements. It isn't so much a game as it is a full-featured and extremely detailed scientific laboratory ported to the computer screen. **Sim Life** is a biologist's dream come true!

Tool fit

SimLife's interface is almost identical to the one found in **SimEarth**. There are buttons, sliders, pull-down menus, charts, graphs, and other tools and play-aids

arranged in windowed menus and pull down menus. Fortunately each window also has its own Help button which briefly explains all the options a player has at his disposal. There are a lot of controls in this game so it's a good idea to run through the game's tutorial once or twice to get a feel for tit.

Gene genie

The tutorial does a great job of explaining all the controls and options available, but it could do an even better job by explaining why the player would want to fool with an option in the first place. For example, the tutorial runs through a natural selection experiment but even after going through the tutorial twice, I still had no idea what affect all the changes I made had on my experimental species.

The game comes with nine scenarios (or 'experiments'). There are three Eco system experiments, three Behavior experiments, and three Evolution experiments. There is also an Experimental Mode which is entirely customizable. All of these are complex affairs and I don't expect that anyone will master these scenarios at one sitting.

One scenario involves creating trees from a low-level pool of plant genes, another involves symbiosis, while a third involves 'The Battle of Sexes' and examines the need and effect of gender relationships within a species. If these sound more like college-level biology term paper topics, it's for a good reason: they are. **SimLife** is not for the casual gamer.

Strategic mutagens

After selecting a scenario the screen is divided up into four different windows, two menu windows and two map windows. Just like the other Sim games from Maxis, there is a strategic map of the whole world and a small edit window that zeros in on a portion of the larger map. The two control windows are the 'species dashboard' which offers a horizontally scrolling list of scores of various plants and animal species, and a set of 'tool' icons that let the player make changes to the selected species. The other control window lets the player make changes to the environment; the climate can be altered, the landscape can be changed, toxins and mutagens can be planted in strategic locations, and a species can be placed on the planet or smitten from its surface.

Once the simulation really gets going, there can be hundreds of different plant and animal species crawling all over the surface of the planet. To better control the action a species can be turned on or off, removing its symbol from the world display temporarily so the player can concentrate on the species he's working on. A de-selected species is still alive and well, it just doesn't clutter up the main view. A useful touch in a simulation that throws a lot of information at the player.

The heart of the game is the Biology Lab. Here a species can be altered in a number of ways, or a whole new species can be created outright. Two nifty features of this screen are the icon editor and the flashcards. The icon editor is a mini-drawing program that can be used to change the appearance of any creature on the screen. There are 16 colors and a 16x16 grid, so the player can create some fairly elaborate icons for his new species.

The flashcards are a stylized depiction of what a species looks like and explains its main characteristics. For example, a creature can be a high-level grainivore that swims, lives in the desert, has a short gestation period and gives

birth to lots of children. The flashcards would show a three-part picture of this strange animal highlighting all of these unique features.

After the playing around with these toys, the real work can be done. Each plant and animal species is rated according to scores of characteristics that can be altered to help or hinder the species' development. Changes made to a species affect how the species reacts to changes in its ecosystem, its behavior patterns, and evolutionary path.

The species' genes can be altered to affect the type of food it likes to eat, its lifespan, how the species will react if it doesn't get enough food or water, and what other species the selected species likes to be around or will avoid. The player is in complete control of a species gene pool, DNA structure, and chromosomes.

Once these changes are made, some take affect immediately, others require a few generations before the results are noticeable. Again, there is a lot to control in this game and it's easy to get lost or confused if a record is not kept of what's going on.

Fortunately the game comes with a lab book that is used to record changes and to track the results.

Big snack

To assist in record keeping and to see the status of a species, there is a Census button that allows access to a whole host of report screens.

The Census screen will report on the health of a species in terms of its population, percentages of male and female creatures surviving in a species, what's eating the species and what *it* is eating (an important statistic when creating complex food chains!), its genetic diversity, and the status of its available gene pool.

The player can also make radical changes aside from playing around with a species' DNA. There is a fun-filled disaster menu that offers comet hits, heat and cold waves, floods, droughts, plagues, and sexually transmitted diseases. As expected, each species will react differently to these outside influences, some may enjoy a rapid progression, others will die off and become extinct.

Sim Life is a pure simulation, not a game. The goal in **Sim Life** is to play with the tools available to set up and run through complicated and detailed experiments based on real biological models.

There is no real way to 'win' **Sim Life** and it has no theoretical ending. Time is counted off in Ticks (one unit of ecological time), days, and years which can run on endlessly. Like **Sim Earth**, **Sim Life** can be left running overnight and the effects of Charles Darwin's theories can be examined the next morning.

As complex as the simulation is, all of the game's features and options can be limited or ignored while the player learns the simulation.

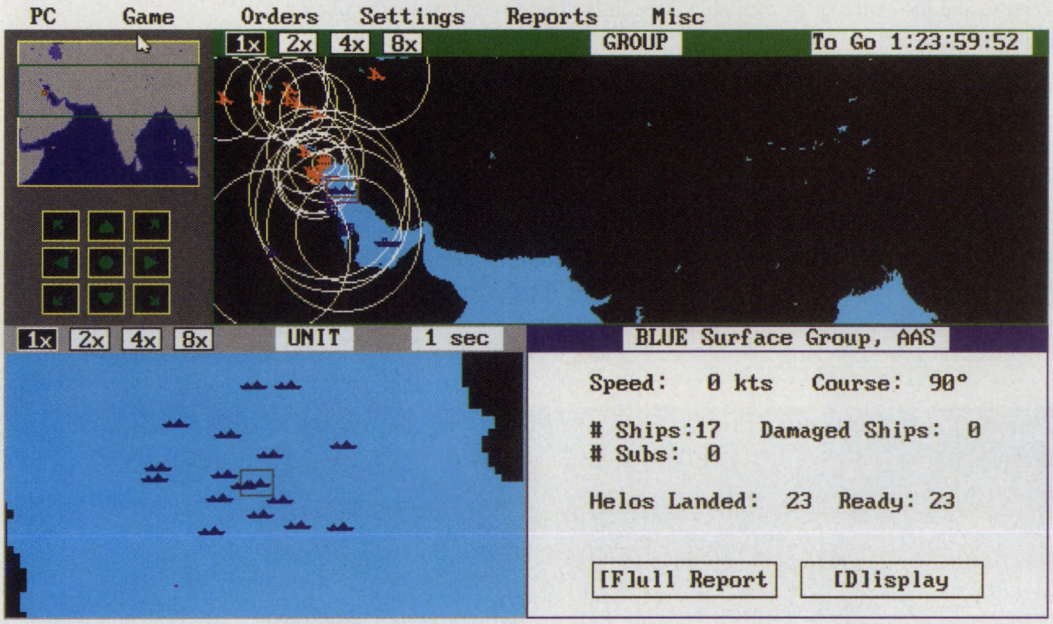
As a general rule, don't touch an option and the game will take care of it for you.

Maxis has given us another detailed software toy designed for people with highly creative and intelligent minds. The graphics are fantastic and the simulation is as much thought-provoking as it is fun. **Sim Life** will not appeal to everyone, but those who liked **Sim Earth** will love **Sim Life**. ❑

Harpoon Designer's Series

Battleset enhancer

By Sandy Eisen



Series design by
Carl Norman and Darrel Dearing

Published by
Three Sixty Pacific

Systems
PC Amiga to follow

Notes
Harpoon master program and additional battlesets required to run most of these scenarios

This latest package from Three-Sixty Pacific is very good news for **Harpoon** aficionados. The news is good for four different reasons: firstly, Three-Sixty are demonstrating a continuing commitment to the best modern naval wargame ever published, by bringing out new battlesets. Secondly, the new package includes 48 new scenarios in 4 new 'designer' battlesets Thirdly the **Harpoon** program has been upgraded to version 1.3 and includes several enhancements. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the development of Harpoon II is confirmed.

Memory command

But first things first: this version of the **Harpoon** program is an evolutionary development from earlier versions. Although we are told that some code has been re-written, the overall appearance and use of the program has not changed. There are several changes to the interface, but these are all minor. These include the addition of time control buttons to the main screen, the ability to load user scenarios more easily, and the addition of double-click mouse controls.

The original **Harpoon** interface was mostly so good that it must have been hard to find areas amenable to simple improvement. This is not to say that there are no aspects where the interface is a little clumsy, but changing them would presumably have been beyond the scope of a simple upgrade.

Harpoon 1.3 can now use EMS and XMS memory automatically, and can be instructed to use QEMM by a command line switch. These changes are stated to increase the speed of program execution. Users should note that at least 570k of base system memory, and preferably more for large scenarios, is still required.

Important areas where the simulation standards of version 1.3 have been enhanced are in the sonar model, torpedo , missile and aircraft modelling, submarine depth handling, and some changes to the AI. Submarines can now only fire missiles from shallow depth (as opposed to any depth in previous versions), and depth changes now require time to change depth (previously such changes were instantaneous). All platforms now have rate of fire limitations, so that an appropriate time interval must elapse while torpedo tubes or missile mounts are reloaded.

Bingo

Many munitions are now more accurately modelled. There are numerous changes in the ways torpedoes and missiles behave. There are so many changes in detail that it is inappropriate to list them all in a short review. Suffice to say that all are explained in a well written 31 page manual supplement for **Harpoon** version 1.3 which is included in the package. Examples of these include semi-active radar homing missiles now requiring that an air search radar is active when they are fired, and throughout tracking to the target, and the ability to launch certain missiles on genuine 'bearing only' attacks even when no potential target is shown on the screen.

There are several alterations to the way the program handles aircraft, again too numerous to list. Players will probably be most pleased to learn that patrols no longer have to be told to return when they reach 'Bingo' fuel, but will do so automatically.

The sonar model has been completely revised, and the program designers are clearly proud of their new work; a page or so of the manual supplement describes all the new factors which it takes account of. In this matter I must express surprise that the original model was as primitive as it was. I must confess that I assumed that the old model took full account of platform speed affecting detection probability. This demonstrates how much designers can get away with if the overall effect appears right.

It is important to note what has not been done. Firstly, **Harpoon** is still a one player game with no possibility of play between two human opponents, either on a single machine or (prefer-

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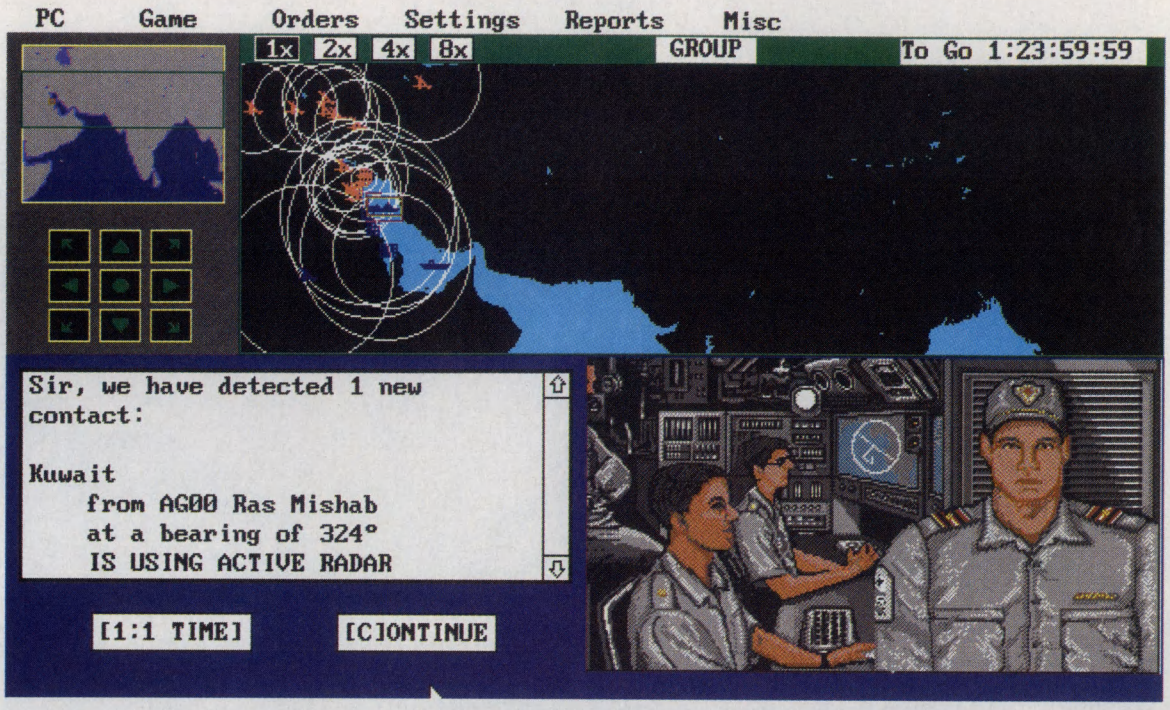

ably) two linked machines. Secondly, despite the reported minor improvements in the program's artificial intelligence, the games AI is still very easy to defeat when played by an experienced player who knows how to tweak the system.

Loss limitation

This effect is compounded because limits on reloads for aircraft munitions have still not been introduced. This results in a disparity between the relative importance of ships and aircraft. In effect aircraft have unlimited ammunition, provided that care is taken to limit losses, and the time is taken to fly home to re-arm. If a player has the patience and inclination to 'micro-manage' his aircraft, then most, if not all losses can be avoided.

Micromanagement involves using 1:1 time, and running away from all anti-aircraft missile threats using afterburners for a precisely adjusted time period. Properly used, this technique can suck all the missiles out of enemy groups and so ensure devastating air supremacy. Such micromanagement should have no place in the simulation of real tactics and strategy. Unfortunately it is difficult to avoid if playing for a win against the computer. The designers do not mention these failings specifically, but state that **Harpoon** 1.3 includes all the features which they could fit into a 640k DOS program. These features (unspecified) are being incorporated into Harpoon II which we are told will be a completely new program on the same subject.

Bakers dozen

Harpoon Designer's Series will load a new Designer Battleset containing 12 new scenarios for each of the 4 original battlesets. On installation this will only be done for those original battlesets already present. If a player only owns the Greenland/Iceland UK Gap battleset, then only a GIUK Designer Battleset will be loaded. If that player subsequently buys and installs, say, the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean, then reinstallation of the Designer's Series will create 12 more scenarios in a second new battleset.If a player already owns all 4 original battlesets, then the Designer series provides 48 new scenarios.

The new scenarios are intended to reflect the tremendous changes to military geopolitics which have occurred in the short time since **Harpoon** first appeared.

Although many scenarios do explore operations in a hypothetical conflict between the US and the CIS, and may not be strikingly different from those between the US and the now defunct Warsaw Pact, there are many others, such as a potential clash between Poland and the CIS in the Baltic, which would have been unthinkable 2 years ago but which are now interesting and merely improbable.

Some scenarios offer a direct extension of today's headlines; there is one which examines a European Community intervention in Yugoslavia to land French and Italian marines in Dubrovnik. The scenarios have been designed by 12 **Harpoon** enthusiasts. Their scale, emphasis and background is thus appropriately varied. The scenarios are presented in a 100 page plus Scenario Manual which gives an introduction and designer's notes for each one. This manual makes fascinating reading for any **Harpoon** fan, and makes it easier for players to make a choice from the vast number which this package provides.

Print management

Since the scenarios use custom battlesets rather than the originals, there is a welcome array of new forces, mostly new bases and ships. One item lacking, and missed by this reviewer, is a listing of the force contents of each battleset. A welcome utility would be one which could print out all the data in a Harpoon battleset in a manageable form.

In summary the **Harpoon Designers' Series** can be recommended to all Harpooners still wanting more scenarios whilst they await Harpoon II. It contains a wealth of new material which will prove both educating and challenging. ❑

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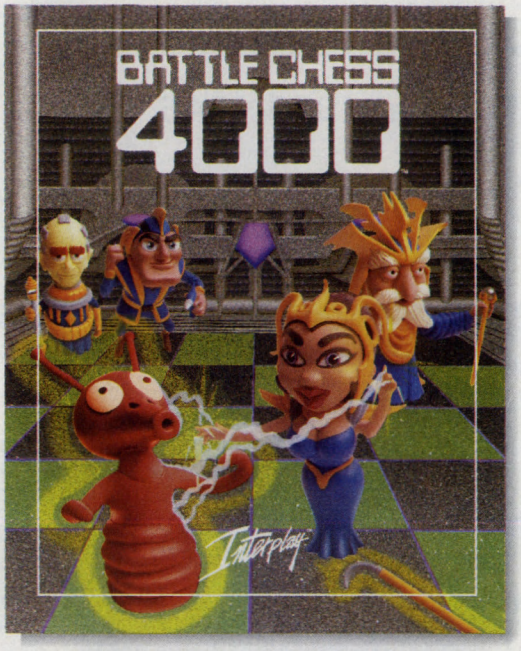

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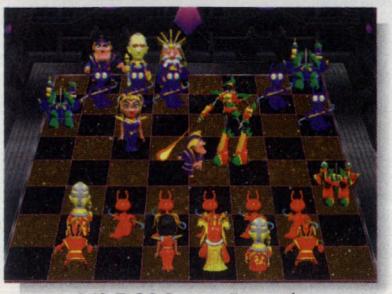

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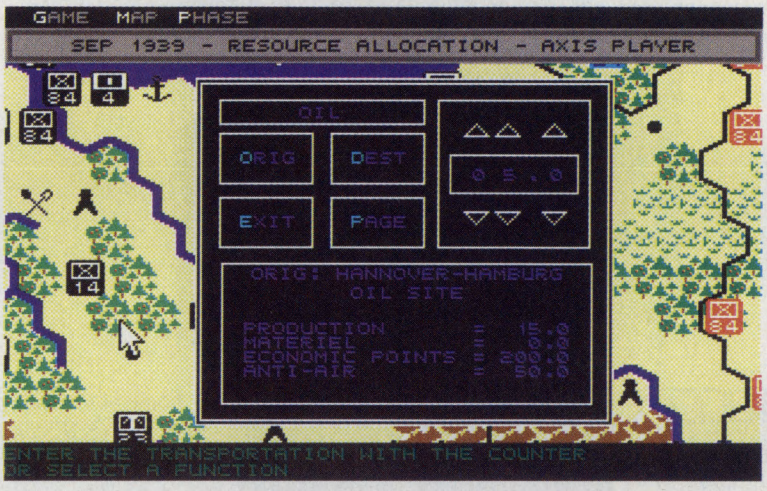
Reader Service No. 43

High Command

The War in Europe: 1939-1945

By Stuart Mitchell



Designed by
Gregg Carter and Joey Nonnast

Published by
Colorado Computer Creations

Systems
IBM PC

PC Graphics
EGA

Supports
mouse and keyboard

Players
1-2

Notes
Version 1.1 which contains many new features will be available to registered

Like many computer strategists, I grew up on board wargames. One of the most popular topics for boardgames in my youth was World War II. There were several excellent games which covered the entire European theatre of war. Once I made the transition to computer games, I found that I had left this subject behind. To be sure, there have been a few attempts to cover World War II in Europe, but none have been successful in presenting the depth of simulation of that seen in boardgames. None, that is, until **High Command**.

A giant step

Quite simply, **High Command** is a monster game in the grand old tradition. In scale and scope it most closely resembles Avalon Hill's **Third Reich**. But it is, if anything, even more detailed than that venerable boardgame. **High Command** covers the entire European theatre of war from Algeria to the Russian Steppes; from Norway to Egypt. Moreover, **High Command** simulates every aspect of strategic leadership. Players are given the opportunity to control land, air, and naval units, manage natural resources, and direct production.

The game is played out on a large map of Europe along with several insets. The map shows salient terrain features, ports, cities, production centers, and mining and petroleum resources. The graphics are crude, but clear and quite acceptable.

In a marine light

The interface is mouse-driven, with the keyboard available as well. Units are shown on the map or hidden at the player's choice. The available units cover virtually every type of armed force that was present in the conflict. There are several land units including regular infantry, airborne units, mountain troops, and mechanized infantry and armor. In the air there are fighters, bombers, rockets, and atomic bombs. The last two unit types must be researched (at great expense) and will likely not be available till the waning years of the war.

Wear and tear

On the sea players may deploy battleships, cruisers, destroyers, carriers, transports and submarines. There are also marines and merchant marine ships. These units are all fairly generic with emphasis on unit type and strength. The game nicely balances these factors to simulate the varied abilities of similar units belonging to different countries. Organization level simulates the degree of wear on units, thus German units may be more effective than other country's forces but constant war will wear them down and render them less and less effective.

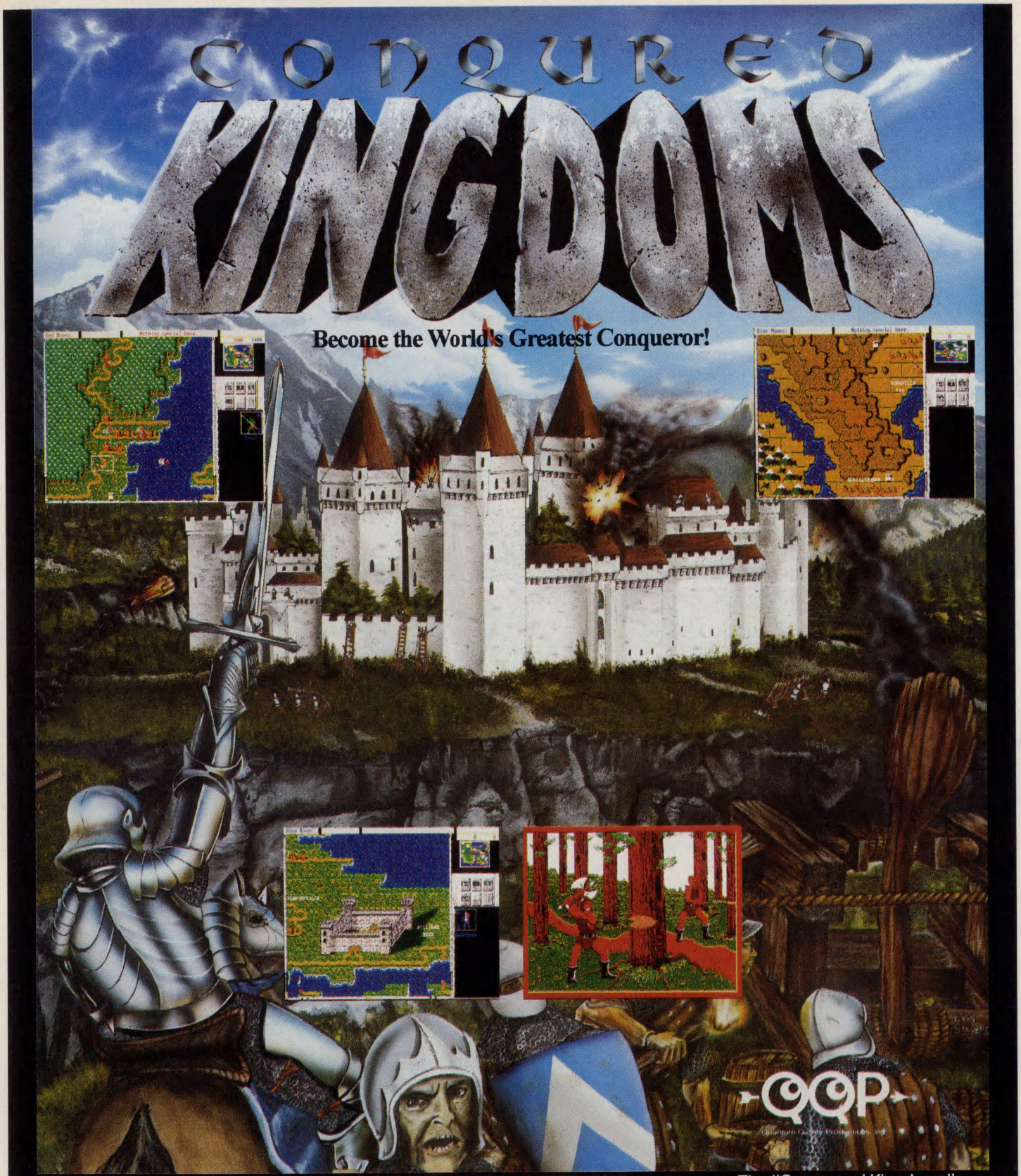
As mentioned before, players not only move military units, they also control the economy which produces them. This is one of the first phases of each turn and is quite involved. Players must first transport resources from mining and petroleum hexes to factories. Factories use these resources to produce units or material and also to grow the national economy. Material must, in turn, be transported to appropriate sites for building other units.

Filling up

In addition to building units, players can (and must) build their economic structure. This consists of building more mining, petroleum, factory and shipbuilding capacity. It also means plowing half or more of economic production back into the economy. If more than more half of such production is put in, economic capacity may grow. Less and it will shrink. This is one of the more subtle (and misunderstood) areas of the game. The publishers, CCC, promises to clarify and simplify this aspect of the game in its next version.

Players must also decide how much of their economic output to put into political efforts. Diplomacy can sway unfriendly countries to neutrality or even eventual alliance. It can also persuade potential allies to join the cause. Diplomatic efforts are impacted by the player's actions in the game. Invade a neutral country and other neutrals will view the invader unfavorably, or even declare war on the invader.

Obviously all of the preceding is quite involved and time-consuming. I



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found that I could spend the better part of an hour managing my economy and diplomacy before I ever touched a military unit. Fortunately, CCC understands that not everyone wants to micromanage their economies when there are blitzes to launch and air raids to be despatched, so they thoughtfully provided options for automatic resource transportation, production and diplomacy. This serves a couple of useful purposes. First, of course, it frees the player from thinking about these complex issues. Second, players may still alter the results of automatic allocations. This lets the player learn from the computer, something I found very handy.

Merchant losses

Once all of the production and diplomacy has been set, the first military phase begins. This is the first of two air phases. Players may move air assets, assign them to ground strikes, send them on naval strikes, attack strategic production resources, or use them in intercept (CAP) missions. Each side determines its battles, then these are resolved simultaneously. During encounters, players may elect to retreat all or some of their forces. The remaining forces fight it out and then return to a base.

Following the first air phase is the first of two naval phases. Naval units may be moved, assigned a patrol area, transport land units launch an amphibious assault, and conduct shore bombardment. Ships and subs may be assigned to interdict merchant marine ships. Losses may also be assigned to escort merchant marine ships.

Finally, players may move their land units. Land units are moved in a series of impulses (six in all). This allows units to be coordinated and timing attacks to be launched. It also facilitates the simultaneous resolution of movement and combat between opposing forces. Airborne troops may be paradropped across sea and enemy-controlled hexes. Other troop types must get there the hard way. Once land movement is resolved, the second air and naval phases are conducted. Once these are finished, the turn ends. The cycle begins again with a weather phase and unit redeployment followed by production.

High Command supports one or two human players. Note that two player games must be conducted face-to-face. There is no modem play option (though one is promised in future versions). The phase-by-phase style of play prohibits playing via file exchange since games may only be saved between turns (not phases).

Players use drop down menus and icons to make their selections. There are some quirks in the interface. Once a unit is selected, it can't be deselected by clicking on it again. Undo commands can only be issued to the top unit in a stack. This can be worked around but it's cumbersome.

The AI in the game ranges from amazing to inept. **High Command**'s AI not only manages opposing forces, but must also make many decisions for the player. This is particularly evident if automatic production is chosen. However, the AI also determines retreat routes for the player. In general it does a decent job of this but its play as the opponent is variable.

British problem

At the start of the scenario, players can assign various attributes to enemy AI including level of aggressiveness as well as overall competence. I found the average levels of these to be adequate, but not particularly challenging. Occasionally, the computer did not always manage its far-flung assets in furtherance of primary goals. This is particularly problematic for the British whose forces tend to be spread across the map. Despite this I still found play challenging

Given all this complexity and the scale of the game, potential buyers might well be daunted. Don't be. The real beauty of **High Command** is the ways in which it helps players manage the complexity of the simulation. The use of automatic resource allocation, production, and diplomacy greatly eases the learning burden.

There is also a tutorial covers most of the important areas, though it is weak in its coverage of economic investment. The layout of the tutorial makes it more difficult to follow but it still proved a godsend in trying to get a grip on this massive game.

The rest of the manual is reasonably comprehensive, though an index is sorely needed as information on topics is sometimes spread between multiple chapters. Despite these reservations, the manual is at least adequate and scores considerably higher than those from some other companies publishing strategy games.

World War justice

For my money, **High Command** is the best strategy/simulation game of 1992. In many ways it resembles a kind of World War II **Harpoon**. Like **Harpoon**, the simulation is deep and broad and the amount of data to be collated seems overwhelming.

And also like **Harpoon**, the AI is not the strong suit of the game. But the quality of the simulation, the wealth of fascinating detail, and the huge scope of the game is incredibly compelling. I seem to discover some new twist or insight each time I play.

It is wonderful to finally have a computer game that does justice to World War II on the grand strategic scale. For players willing to work a little at their play, **High Command** is a mandatory purchase. ❑

Notes for beginners

First time players would be well-advised to let the computer manage resource transportation and production. Once players have selected automatic for these two items, they may still go back and alter the results. Observing the computer's allocation of resources and production can be instructive.

Make liberal use of airpower to disorganize and destroy ground units before attacking. In the current version, air units can completely destroy land units in ground strikes. It's unrealistic, but use this to advantage.

The best way to eliminate enemy air and naval assets is to take their home port or airbase with land units. Use ground strikes to reduce or eliminate garrisoned units, then move in. Paratroopers are useful for this role.

Try a first turn attack on France and the Low Countries. Players may put off attacking Poland for a turn or two if this is done. Wait too long on France, and it becomes quite a chore to conquer it.

Though the manual implies otherwise, both the mouse and keyboard can be used in conjunction. Use the 'hs' option when loading **High Command** to see what the individual keystrokes are.

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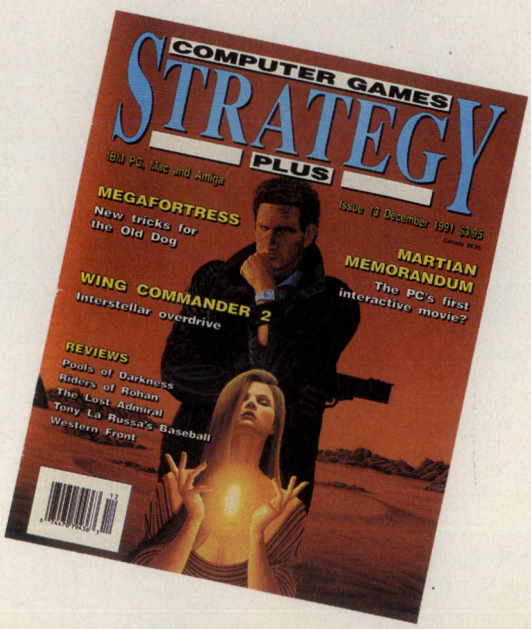

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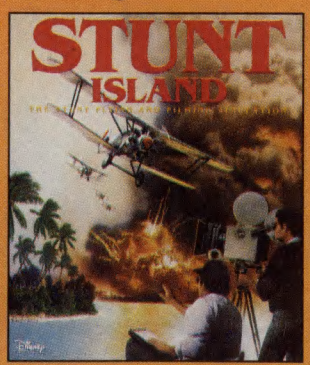

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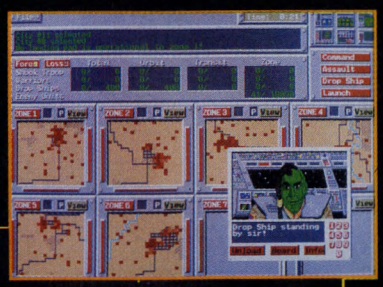

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MINDCRAFT

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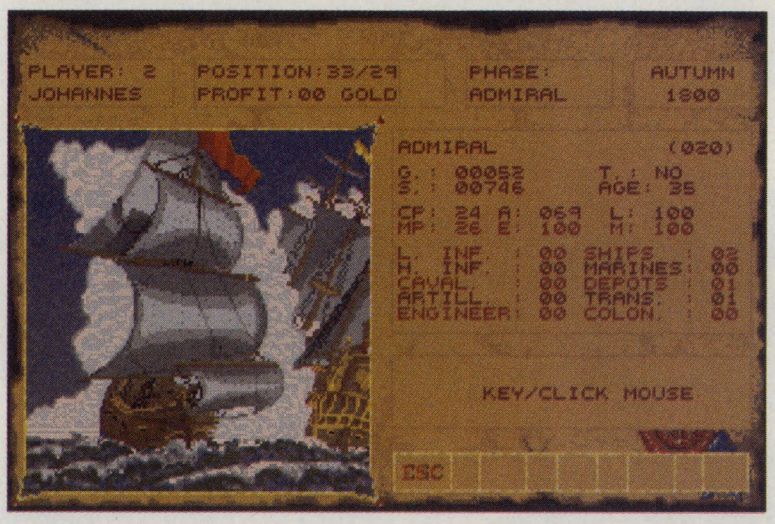
(Actual screens may vary.)

Reader Service No. 10

Spoils of War

Hola conquistador

By Steven Wartofsky



Designed by
The German Design Group

Published by
RAW (US)
Storm (UK)

Systems
PC Amiga

PC Graphics
VGA

Supports
Mouse, keyboard

Players
1-4

Highly reminiscent of SSG's **Gold of the Americas**, GDC's **Spoils of War** would seem to have plenty on offer, given a basic description of the design: one to four players, controllable by human or computer; four seasons each with different impact on movement and supply; chain of command factors; infantry, cavalry, engineers, artillery, fleets, depots, transports, colonists to push around; fourteen different terrain types; and so on. At this level of conception, the scheme is obviously to produce an ambitious, complex, and highly challenging strategy game.

Catch 64

The catch is in the way it all comes together. The map screen, in particular, is barely readable, and looks like something out of an old Hewson game or an Nintendo RPG. The icons and information screens are highly reminiscent of Commodore 64 design, and not particularly good C64 design at that.

Most importantly, however, the game interface is counter-intuitive in the extreme. The designers provide a system that features almost no logical flow from one moment or phase of the game to the next. Constant consultation of a poorly organized manual will be necessary for a good long while until the player is familiar enough with the game to figure out how to move around.

The escape key, normally used in almost every piece of computer software I've seen for backing out of a screen or of choices made, is used here to end selection processes. Nothing in either the manual or on the screen indicates which of the many empty boxes to click on, initially, to perform the action of choosing a player for startup.

Gold flinger

Information on the player's ships, troops, gold, etc. is minimally represented with simple numerical values, more appropriate for a serious text-based strategy game but totally incommensurate with the style of play suggested in the rest of the design.

Although the mouse can be used for many choices, the keyboard is relied on for map scrolling and certain forms of input, so the player must be divided (again, in a way that remains inscrutable for a good long while) between mouse and keyboard input at numerous points. Keyboard alone is a more recommended form of play, but then how to click on arrows to increase or decrease certain choices such as number of colonists? Nothing is highlighted when selected, by the way, adding to the hit or miss feel of the whole thing.

The situation of the game involves the player's competition with from one to three other players for colonization and conquest of territory.

Colonial conquest

A certain amount of gold is given to each player to start with, which can be allocated for purchasing leaders, colonists, and for investing in established colonies and armies. Troops can be assigned to various leaders and trained to improve performance, and colonies can be expanded by building harbors and such. Explorers are sent out to find new territory potentially worthy of conquest, and gifts and trading can take place between players.

A series of context-dependent menus and sub-menus are accessed via function keys to perform various actions. Each turn breaks down into a strategy phase, where the player makes resource management choices, and an action phase, where movement and battle options are worked out.

There's nothing in all this that hasn't been seen before, and none of it has been implemented as effectively as it is in, say, **Imperium**. While there are a whole host of rules for marching and building on different types of terrain, and while the manual suggests a wide variety of types of play, from land battles to sea battles to territorial discovery and colonial expansion, it all seems piled on top of each other without any thought to producing an intelligent or logical game.

The illusion of variety also collapses once play reveals itself as the shuffling around of 'gold' points and numbers from one place to another. **Spoils of War** thus often ends up feeling like fighting against the limitations of a poorly implemented spreadsheet more than it does like a game of conquest, exploration and discovery. ❑

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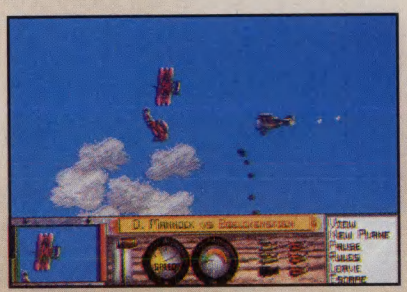

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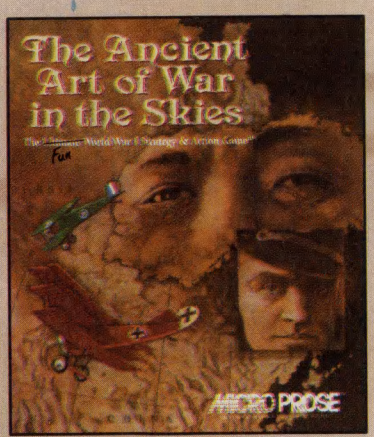

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Carriers At War

Flat top fandango

By Stuart Mitchell

Years ago, SSG released the first realistic portrayal of carrier combat in the Pacific: **Carriers at War**. The game was designed to tax the limits of the prevalent computers of the time: 8-bit machines with 64k of RAM. As the years passed, hardware evolved as did the games that ran on that hardware.

When Ian Trout and Roger Keating sat down to port **Carriers at War** to the 16-bit world, they took a hard look at the current hardware and the current state of gaming. And they threw out all the work that had been done before, choosing to craft a completely new game that was designed from the ground up with today's hardware capabilities in mind.

Pacific sound

The new **Carriers at War** sports outstanding high-resolution graphics, digitized sounds, and a mouse-driven interface. In many ways, it resembles *nouveau cuisine*. The meal is presented in flawless fashion, its appearance wonderful to behold. And like *nouveau cuisine*, this meal is rather less filling than many patrons might prefer.

In **Carriers at War**, players take on the role of fleet commander. They use the forces at their disposal to prosecute their side's aims in seven different scenarios. Each side can muster land and carrier-based planes as well as a full array of surface ships.

The game takes place on a strategic map, with one map for each scenario. This map is shown at a large scale so that more specific control of ships and planes must be conducted on other screens. The interaction between these screens is handled smoothly for the most part and players will find that the interface helps simplify the complexity of the simulation.

Search sector

The ships are organized into task forces and task groups which are given orders about movement and formation. Within most task groups there will be several ships. Carrier task groups include at least one carrier. The heart of the game lies in commanding these carriers and their air assets. In the main this consists of sending out search planes to find enemy task forces, then maneuvering to launch a strike before the enemy finds the task forces.

Search patterns are set for each carrier task group by clicking on any of eight sectors arrayed around the group. Searches can be set up for each task group with search planes as well as for land bases with search aircraft. Sightings are reported with a bright yellow marker on the map and may be examined in more detail in a sighting report. This information should be taken with grain of salt, however, as searching pilots have been known to exaggerate a task groups size or miss the presence of key ships.

While these searches are being conducted, players will have issued movement orders to each task group. Movement can be directed to a heading, a strategic point (eg land bases), another task group, or as a type of movement (eg escort). In addition, ships can be rearranged within a task group. Players control the speed of movement with realistic account being kept of fuel burned based on speed and time.

Another area that must be managed is the disposition of carriers planes. Planes must be armed and fueled, assigned to CAP, sent out on strikes, sent out as escorts, and even transferred to land bases. These take time and players must carefully balance their assets, their objectives, targets of opportunity, and the time required to pursue various goals.

Auto pilot

To help in assessing goals and their chances of attaining them, an enormous amount of data is provided assimilation. Each plane is rated for its flying characteristics, its armament, and its bombload. In addition, each pilot is rated for their level of expertise (green to ace).

And of course each ship is rated in detail including armor (top and belt), guns, AA, fire control, and top speed.

The game could easily get bogged down in the minutiae of all this detail, but **CAW** automates most functions for the player. Takeoffs and landings are automatic. CAP launches are also automatic once the player assigns aircraft to CAP duty. Ships are deployed in task groups in sensible formations that few will need to change. The dispersal of landing aircraft is automatic, players need merely to assign craft to be refueled and rearmed to prepare them for a new assignment. Damaged aircraft are auto-

Designed by
Ian Trout and Roger Keating

Published by
SSG

Systems
PC

PC Graphics
VGA

Supports
AdLib compatible soundcards. Mouse and keyboard

matically kept dispersed and players needn't manage them.

CAW also includes a detailed, if abstract, surface combat module. This permits surface ships to be maneuvered and fire assigned to targets when surface ships approach enemy vessels closely. This rarely happens (or shouldn't happen often), but is fun to watch when it does occur.

Which leads to the next point. The game is wonderfully illustrated with detailed pictures of each plane and ship type in the game. This means literally dozens of illustrations for each side. These illustrations are not simply static fluff. When strikes are resolved, target ships are displayed and animations of AA flak and bomb impacts are shown. The affect is to give players a much greater sense of what has happened than numbers alone could show. My only complaint here is that ships that are sunk are not shown to be sunk during the strike sequence.

Card room

The game is primarily intended for solitaire play, though two players can play. The game runs in real time with breaks being allowed at any time. During breaks, information can be scanned and orders given. But of course, the opposing player will need to look away during this sequence. Modem play is not supported. However, SSG has created a new innovation in their AI repertoire that will aid play-by-modem. This is the WarRoom. The WarRoom is essentially a set of cards for each scenario that directs each component of one side's forces. It is a mechanism for programming the side's forces and for allowing them to be easily re-programmed. In **Carriers at War**, the WarRoom cards are set for each side. However, an editor is promised that will let players craft their own WarRoom cards which can then be exchanged for a kind of remote competition.

The game comes with documentation that is lengthy, but thin on some important details. The documentation covers the rudiments of play and includes a tutorial that, unfortunately, does not cover all aspects of game play. The later documentation covers all the commands, but fails to weave it all into something that makes sense as a whole. Players must experiment to figure out how search planes and CAP work as opposed to strikes. The documentation does include quite a bit of historical background and commentary that helps bring the scenarios to life. Color maps are also provided as play aids.

My feelings about this game are decidedly ambivalent. This is a game long anticipated by the industry and by myself personally. Much that sounded wonderfully attractive in previews is in the game. The new graphics and interface lend a nice flavor to the game. The amount of detail behind each ship and plane is impressive. The level of command given to the player seems appropriate.

Yet the whole does not gel. The control over search planes is strange, with little feedback given to the player about what is happening and what sectors have actually been covered and when. Much of the game seems to operate in this sort of vacuum. Strike aircraft choose their targets for themselves. Their efforts during the strike cannot be directed (probably realistic), nor beforehand (less realistic). Submarines seemed to act like a randomizer, with no control given to either the player or the opponent. Submarine intervention was often dramatic, but with no control given to the player, they seemed to be an annoying distraction.

First aids

In general, the player has relatively little to do in the game. Players can direct movement of task groups can be directed, search sectors assigned, CAP's and strikes launched. The game has been cleverly designed to eliminate drudgery and book keeping and to streamline the process of controlling a large fleet. Unfortunately, much of the flavor of the era seems to have been distilled out as well.

On the other hand, there are clearly subtleties of naval combat in World War II that the game can teach. The proper use of escorting task groups, how to foil enemy searches, when to launch a strike, and so on. The decision points presented to the player may be few, but they can be important in very subtle ways. The documentation hints at some of these, but the designers seemed to feel that experience is the best teacher. The visual presentation is crisp and detailed, but obvious aids to play are left out such as range circles and searched sectors.

I had fun at several points while playing, while at other times I was bored silly. This may simulate the reality of carrier battles, but it doesn't play well during my few recreational hours. The game lets you control this to an extent, but with relatively little to do, the time can seem somewhat empty. The bottom line is that the game gets a guarded recommendation.

If players are willing to struggle with a simulation that controls more than it is controlled and teaches in the subtlest of ways, **Carriers at War** may be an excellent match.

For those who want rich, detailed game play with plenty of decision points big and small, **Carriers** will feel a bit too much like an auto-pilot. The feel of the simulation is good, and the new interface and graphics are well-done. The game works in many ways, but it isn't as, well, as much fun as I had hoped it would be. ❑

Air Bucks

Reach for the pie

By Mike Woodhouse

Designed by
Eddie Grabowski

Published by
Impressions

Systems
PC Amiga

PC Graphics
VGA

Supports
Mouse, keyboard

Notes
This review was based on the UK version. Impressions say that the US version will contain a number of improvements. See news pages for details.

The airline business really started to develop in the 1950's, as wartime technological advances started to filter through to the marketplace. At the same time, consumer buying power started to grow to the point at which small, but nonetheless significant numbers of people could afford commercial air travel, particularly within North America. **Air Bucks** follows the development of the commercial airline business from this time to the present day.

Miami twice

Starting with enough capital to purchase a short-range aircraft and landing rights in Miami, the prospective entrepreneur must bid against competitors for the rights to other cities. Once acquired, revenue-generating routes can be established which hopefully will generate sufficient revenue to cover operating costs and generate healthy profits, thus allowing further expansion. As time goes on a network of routes develops. New aircraft allow greater distances to be covered between cities and at greater speed. Naturally, this allows higher fares to be charged since customers will pay premium rates for premium service.

There are up to four competing airlines but only two companies may acquire landing rights at any one city. Owners may find themselves cutting fares to the bone (and beyond) in order to win the lion's share of the passengers and cargo available on a given route. As time passes, financial difficulties may necessitate borrowing from the bank or even the selling of shares in the company.

The bank will expect a certain minimum maintenance, and may threaten to remove the player if their criteria are not met. All this sounds like a recipe for a rich, varied and absorbing series of all night gaming sessions. Well, it did to me. The benchmark for a game of this type must be **Railroad Tycoon**, which despite its profoundly irritating bugs, remains my all-time favourite game. **Air Bucks** promised to be the global airgoing equivalent.

Type blast

As regular readers may have noticed by now, I have a particular interest in user interfaces. I expect a program to make the user's interaction with it a painless and non-intrusive experience. Drop-down menus, hot-key shortcuts for frequently used functions and a reasonable degree of lip-service being paid to *de facto* PC standards, are all to be expected in a strategy game. The **Air Bucks** user interface, whilst appearing initially to conform to these basic tenets, soon reveals itself to be a poor specimen. One wonders, for example, why the programmers completely ignored the existence of the Escape key in favour of the space bar when exiting menus. And furthermore, since the keyboard may be used to increment or decrement a fare when editing a route (which may have as many as eighteen individual numbers to be altered), was there not an option to simply type in the required number?

Loan lark

Graphically the game appears appealing, at least at the outset. A world map shows cities serviced and the routes that exist between them. A zoom mode allows the player to view aircraft taking off and landing in a smaller area. Since no actions can be taken when in this mode, it is completely useless, leaving only the completely static world map to entertain the player while the game chugs along....And that's the worst thing. The game really does play itself. After two false starts, I was able to amble into an apparently unassailable lead whilst spending the best of five hours that this entailed watching TV!

Intermittently the bank expressed its displeasure that my company had perhaps a smaller fleet or less routes than my computer controlled competitors. Since I not only had no outstanding loan but in fact had about 40 million dollars deposited with said bank, I took these warnings with a large pinch of salt.

Impressions have a history of reasonable ideas inadequately designed and poorly implemented. I have long felt that the latter, in particular, was due to a failure to play-test widely enough, combined with an excessive amount of pressure to get the product on the shelves. **Air Bucks** has a *genuinely* good game idea behind it. Sadly, the implementation is still lacking.

Impressions have said that a number of enhancements will be made for the US version. If that is so, there is no reason for anyone to consider a purchase until that happens. Any changes will have to be substantial. As it stands, **Air Bucks** is only of value as an object lesson in how not to develop what really is a fine basic concept. ❑

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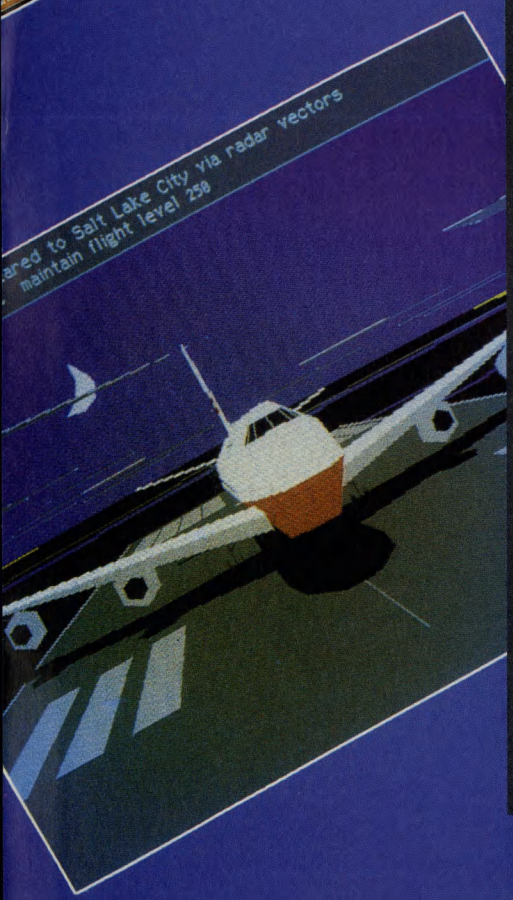
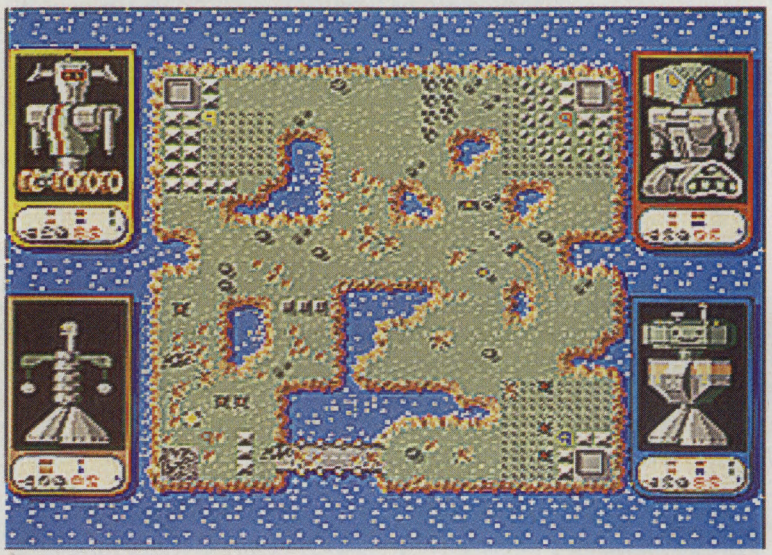


Traders

Kicking ass

by John Harrington



Designed by
Andre Wuethrich and Marcus Grimmer

Published by
Linel (Europe)
Merit (US)

Systems
PC Amiga Atari ST

PC graphics
VGA

Players
1 to 4

Notes
Simultaneous play using combination of keyboard, joystick or mouse inputs.

In issue 19 of *Strategy Plus* Dan Bunten, designer of the eight bit classic **M.U.L.E.**, asked if anyone would be interested in a M.U.L.E. II. Well, if anyone is they might as well buy **Traders** for it is plainly 'Son of **M.U.L.E.**'

For those unfamiliar with **M.U.L.E.**, a more meaningful description of **Traders** might be in order. It is a four player game set on a fairly desolate planet where three types of commodities can be cultivated: water, perfumeand roses. In a simultaneous movement phase, each player selects plots of land and determines which commodity to cultivate on each plot. The commodities are then sold in the market place, either to other players or to Fat Mike, the giant green bogie man who rules the planet.

Whiff of scandal

The relationships between the commodities make both the farming and the trading tricky. For instance, to cultivate roses it is necessary to create a water basin and then add perfume. Subsequently, the roses can be planted on land and watered to produce perfume. The perfume (I think the Swiss designers overdosed on perfume themselves) can then be used to lure giant rabbits who will dig for water provided they are fed on roses. Thus it is necessary to have sufficient supplies of each commodity to keep the production chain going but there are also economies of scale on offer through specialization.

The effect of terrain on crop yields is an added complication as is the limited time available to make and act on these decisions; other players are also wandering around staking land claims and changing their production schedules. Not surprisingly, successful trading is the key to success.

Prior to each commodity's trading session a limited period of time is available to examine stock levels and decide whether to buy or sell. Sellers move to the top of the screen, buyers stay at the bottom.

When trading begins, buyers increase their bid price by moving up the screen whilst sellers lower their offer price by moving down screen. When a buyer and seller draw level commodities change hands at the indicated price until one party withdraws. Much fun can be had dancing back and forth to shave a few extra dollars but this can backfire and turn into a desperate sprint to consummate a deal at any price before time runs out.

Apart from a few cosmetic differences, the game as described above is exactly the same as **M.U.L.E.**, the only real improvement being simultaneous, rather than sequential, movement in the land cultivation phase. This improvement is counterbalanced by the inferior artificial intelligence of the computer controlled players, who have an inflexible notion of haggling and no concept of cornering a market.

Crawl St

Traders does offer two original elements. First, there are the snails. L'escargots are sacred on the home planet and each turn Fat Mike demands payment in the form of these slimy snacks. Failure to pay results in crop devastation or land confiscation. The snails are brought back from nearby planets in rockets launched from land which would otherwise be used for farming. One of the planets is named Irata, which not only spells Atari backwards but was also the name of the home planet in **M.U.L.E.**

The other original feature is an arcade sequence where each player controls a robot to defend their own warehouse or attack and loot an opponent's. The battle system is cumbersome and reminiscent of a very old arcade game called **Berzerk**. A preferences menu enables this part of the game to be automatically by-passed.

These additions to the basic **M.U.L.E.** formula broaden the game's appeal whilst remaining true to the spirit of a game in which lots of tough decisions have to be made quickly to survive in a symbiotic economy.

As a solitaire game it lacks challenge and its eight bit origins become apparent. The computer players trade rigidly and success is more likely to be earned through farming than trading. There are better ways of spending three hours alone with a computer, but as a multiplayer game I would have to rank **Traders** in the top ten of all time. However, I feel that this accolade is more a tribute to Dan Bunten than the Swiss gentlemen who designed this game. And by the way, Dan, I'm still interested in M.U.L.E. II. ❑

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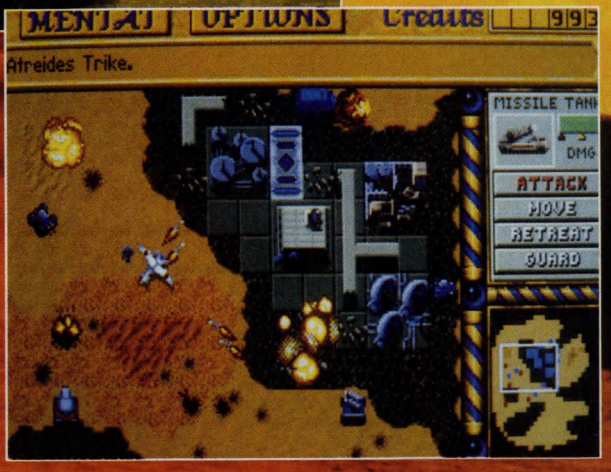

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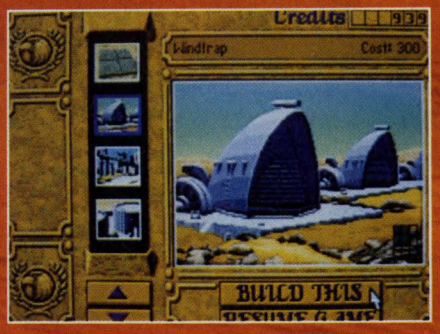

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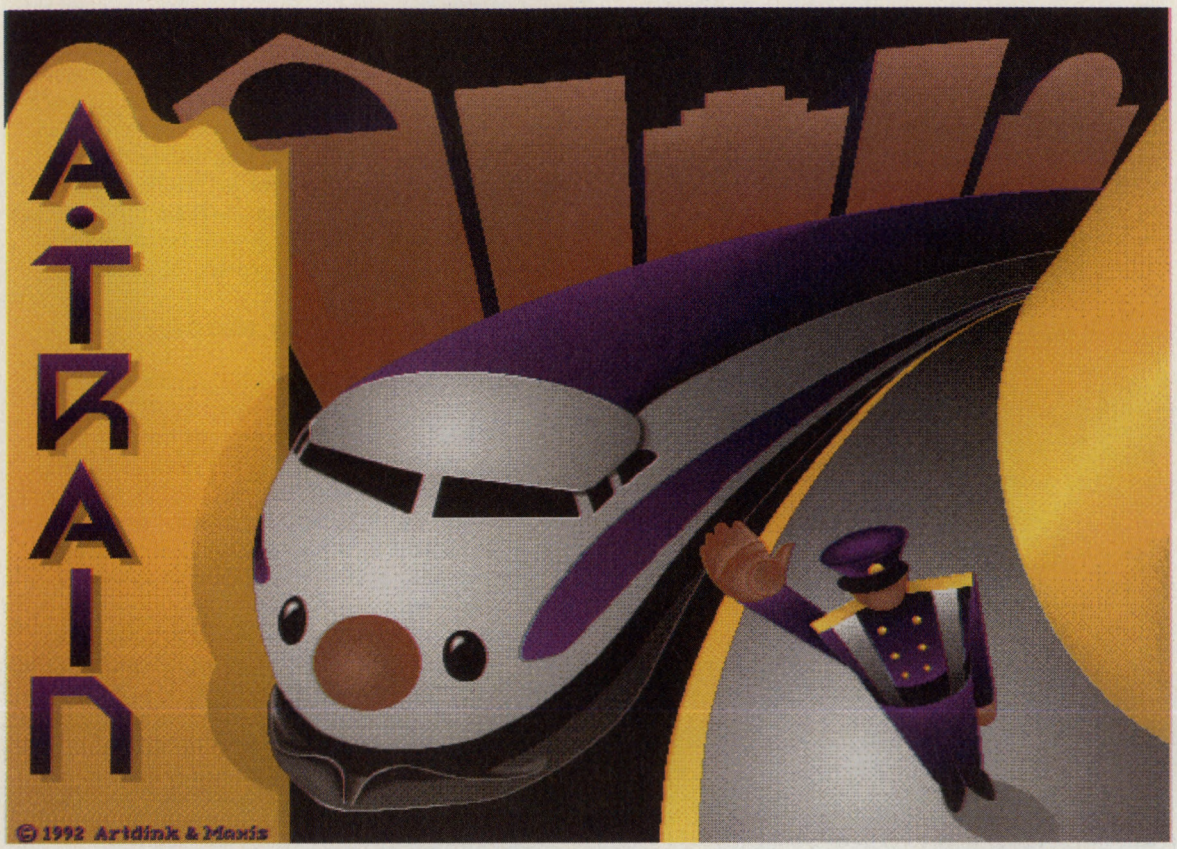


Strategy and tactics in Maxis' A-Train: Peter Szymonik clips your ticket

Let's get the obvious question out of the way, while **A-Train** is superficially like **Sim City**, it's a different type of game. **A-Train** can be very confusing at times. Wrapped up inside the obvious railroad design simulator are two other games; a financial simulator and a real estate simulator. The key to **A-Train** is being able to successfully manage all three. The reward is a prosperous and growing city.

Working on the railroad

Let's begin with the railroad simulator. This is what probably draws most people to the game and Maxis has done a decent job of providing the player with a good model railroad. Railroads in the game do two very important things: they bring raw materials and supplies to various parts of the city and the surrounding environs, and they ferry commuters back and forth between the suburban areas and the center of the city. The game even appears to have hobos; run a railroad track to nowhere and for some reason people will dutifully take the train every morning out to the middle of nowhere.

The railroad grid must be well designed for running track is expensive. The best way to drain money in this game is to lay track in the wrong place only to have to rip it up later.

Careful planning early in the game will pay off big dividends in the long run since this game isn't very forgiving of mistakes. The key to the game is to start slow, building one area at a time and resisting the urge to lay track all over the map. Build a short and straight rail line and use it as a stable base for future lines. Find an area with plenty of space for development and run a simple length of track out to it.

I found it easiest to run one length north and south, and then one from east to west in a cross formation. Then when the time comes, it's easy to simply connect the ends of the cross with four more straight lengths of track. Making this type of criss-cross square keeps materials and people flowing around a large area of land. The only caveat to this approach is to be sure the lines aren't so long that the fastest train can make a complete circuit in one full day.

People mover

Other than moving raw material and people back and forth there isn't much else that the railroad simulator is good for. There aren't many fantastic differences between the various types of trains, other than capacities and building costs. The best passenger train is the mighty AR III and the best freight model is the trusty ED 76. Stick to these two models once the game is rolling and there will be no need to buy another trains.

There are a few more rules to follow in developing the railroad. Use freight trains only when they are needed to haul in materials for construction, otherwise mothball them.

A-Train

Published by
Maxis

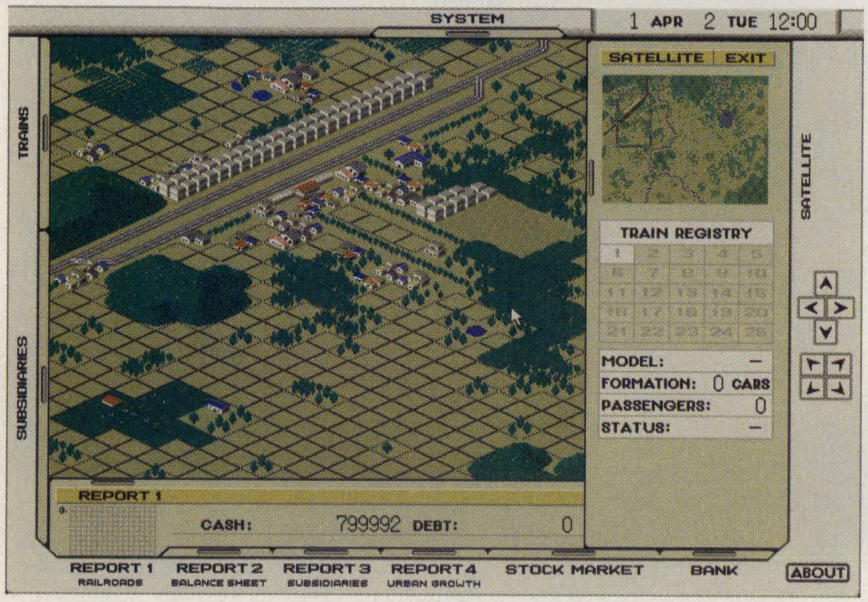
Systems
PC

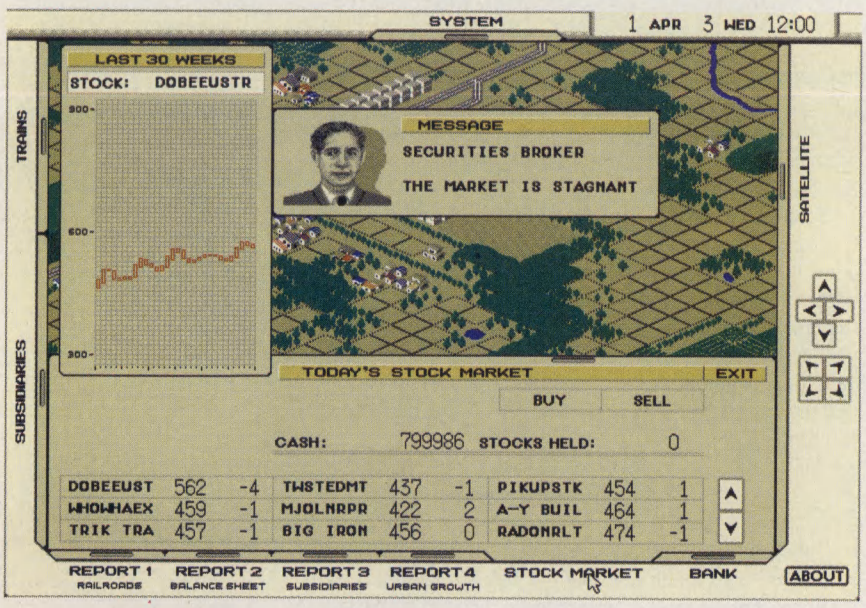
Notes
A full review of this game appeared in issue 21

Run dual lines (passenger and freight) to the same location to speed development and to prevent railroad tie-ups and collisions, but be aware that this tactic is costly. Build stations according to the development planned. A large station in the middle of nowhere won't be useful since it needs a large urban area nearby in order to be effective.

Finally, keep on eye on the raw material stockpiles. Nothing is more annoying (and costly) than watching a train roll away with raw materials because the stockpile they were destined for is full.

Other than that, keep the schedule in order and the railroad will just about run itself once its fully developed. Be sure trains arrive to pick up and drop off commuters at the proper time, commuters get quite angry when their train isn't there on time and the bottom line will reflect that.





The game is won by accumulating $50 million in cash, making the player a highly successful rail baron and entrepreneur. This is far from easy and in fact, it takes a lot of game experience to reach this lofty goal. Losing is much easier - simply miss one tax payment come April 1st and the game is over. Its no surprise then that the financial simulator is the key to successful A-Train development. Be prepared to go bankrupt often, **A-Train** is not a simple game to master and it will take a while before all the financial wheeling and dealing becomes second-nature.

Rolling stock

The stock market isn't as much a gamble as it may seem and as it is in real life. By using the stock price charts and tables, it's pretty easy to spot trends in the market and to invest here wisely. The stocks are clearly cyclical, track a stock for a few weeks and the trends will become noticeable. If for no other reason, keep a percentage of the bankroll in the market because it is one of the more active parts of the game and the chance for make a quick buck is there.

Taxes are paid on April 1st and they are quite brutal - 50% on profits and 5% on assets. What the game is trying to say is 'Buy everything you can before March 31st!' Extra cash should be poured into commercial real estate and facilities, this can not be under-estimated, the 50% tax on profits will end more games than other factor in **A-Train**. Be prepared for this hit every year by investing money and remember that every penny counts. **A-Train** just does not like frivolous spending.

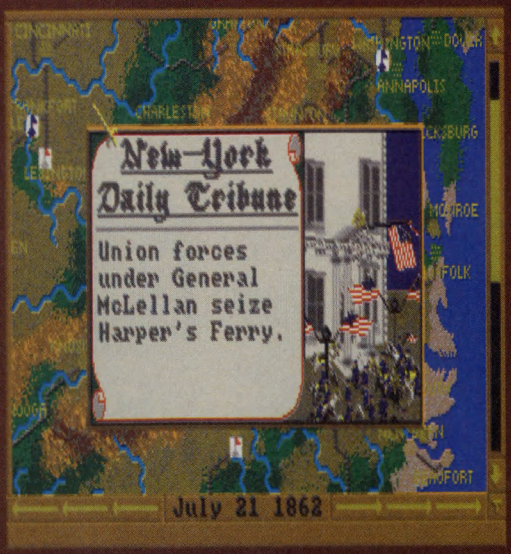
Fortunately, railroad taxes are small comparatively speaking. After building the initial rail net maintenance costs are minor. Passengers pay for most of the railroad's operating costs (as long as they are picked up and dropped off on time!).

Property is thrift

Be aware that real estate prices can be controlled in the real estate part of the game. It's easy to assume that the computer is in charge of land prices, but in fact, the player controls the going rate. How? Simple, anywhere rail and buildings are built, property values will rise dramatically, so it's best to invest in some land each and every turn. As the rails reach out to those purchased tracts of land, their value will rise.

Now it might seem logical that this is a great way to make a quick profit. Buy some land, run rail out to it and then sell when the prices rise. But resist the temptation since this is only a short term gain and not very cost effective. Better to hold onto the land for future development, a hotel will bring in far more profit than selling off large tracts of newly valued land. Plan construction according to the size of the city. There is little sense in building a high rise in a small town just starting to develop and big ticket items like amusement parks and golf courses are best left for large urban areas.

A-Train can be won, it just takes patience and a lot of practice to balance all the variables just right. The game is unforgiving so be prepared to miss that April 1st tax payment a few times. By following the above guidelines, a sprawling metropolis will eventually grace the computer screen. ❑



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Grand Slam Bridge

Designed by
Fred Clyne and Nathan Schneiderman

Published by
Electronic Arts

Micro Bridge Companion

Designed by
Thomas Throop

Published by
Great Game Products
8804 Chalon Drive
Bethesda, MD 20817

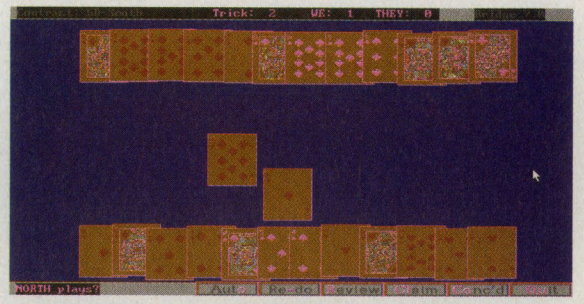
Notes
All of the above games are available for the PC only
Screen shot taken from Bridge 7.0 by Artworx

The game of bridge is probably the most challenging traditional game to implement on a computer. A bridge player must continually make inferences about the hidden cards. Also, bridge is a partnership game. A good player must bid and play cooperatively, describing his hand to partner as well as 'reading' partner's bidding and play messages. It should not come as a surprise that the overall quality of computer bridge games is considerably lower than that of most chess programs.

I looked at four programs for this comparative survey - **Bridge 7.0** from Artworx, **Bridge Buff** from BridgeWare, **Grand Slam Bridge** from Electronic Arts, and **Micro Bridge Companion** from Great Game Products. All except **Bridge 7.0** and **Bridge Buff** allow the player to bid and play predetermined or randomly selected hands with any combination of human and computer opponents.

Bridge 7.0 from Artworx is a step up in quality of play and a step down in chrome from **Omar Sharif Bridge** (reviewed issue 19). **Bridge 7.0** is the sole program reviewed that allows only one human player. I found the cards harder to read than in any of the other programs, but the mouse interface was clean and easy to use. There is a nice digitized sound feature (does not require a soundcard) in which the computer players speak their bids. There is also a good hint feature during bidding only which not only suggests what the player should bid, but why he should bid it. This product is acceptable for beginners, but the bidding and play will probably frustrate more experienced players.

Bridge Buff from BridgeWare in Toronto (players will probably need to direct-order this one) is a different animal entirely. It has no frills; even the manual is photocopied. There is no mouse support and the keyboard interface is cumbersome (the player has to press a key for every bid and play - even those of the computer players!). Also, although **Bridge Buff** has full bidding functionality, the player can only play hands as declarer - the computer always defends. On the other hand, what the program does, it does extremely well. **Bridge Buff** features expert-level bidding and defensive play, and has a nice help feature that explains the other players' bids and also suggests bids when asked. This is an excellent program for advanced and expert-level bridge players to practice bidding against the computer or with a favorite partner. It is not for beginners.



Grand Slam Bridge from Electronic Arts is an 'oldie, but goodie.' It was released in 1985 but is still available in some stores. The CGA graphics are primitive and there is no mouse support, but that's all I found wrong with **'Grand Slam'**. The keyboard interface is comfortable and the program provides a full set of options including several bidding conventions and the ability to deal hands meeting specific criteria (eg 2-suited opening hands). It also plays a pretty solid game of bridge, and is overall my choice of the best program for beginning players.

Micro Bridge Companion (aka **Bridge Baron**) from Great Game Products is another solid product and plays a good game of bridge. '**MBC**' does not have mouse or sound card support, and it's a little on the slow side on a 286, but the keyboard interface is friendly. I particularly liked '**MBC**'s 'match play' option, in which one can play a series of hands, then have the computer replay them and compare results. **MBC** also features 'bidding flowcharts' which show how the program determines its bids; I found this feature interesting but less useful than Artworx's and **Bridge Buff**'s 'hint' keys.

All of these programs have several big advantages over live players - they're available whenever the player wants them and they don't sneer when he does something stupid.

Players at any level will enjoy playing either **Micro Bridge Companion** or **Grand Slam Bridge**. Artworx provides a reasonable alternative for beginners, and **Bridge Buff** can serve as a useful tool for advanced players. ❑

Trade Up!

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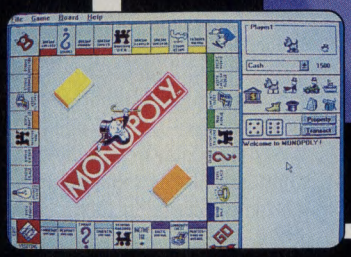

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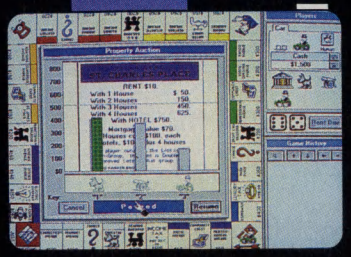

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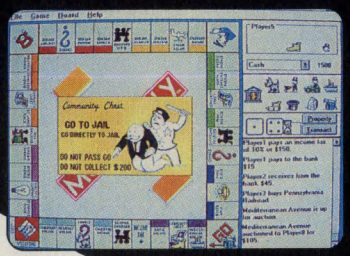

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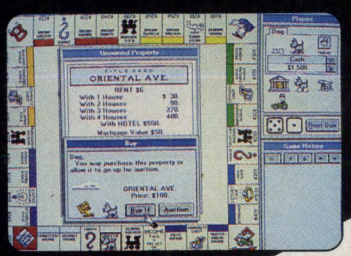

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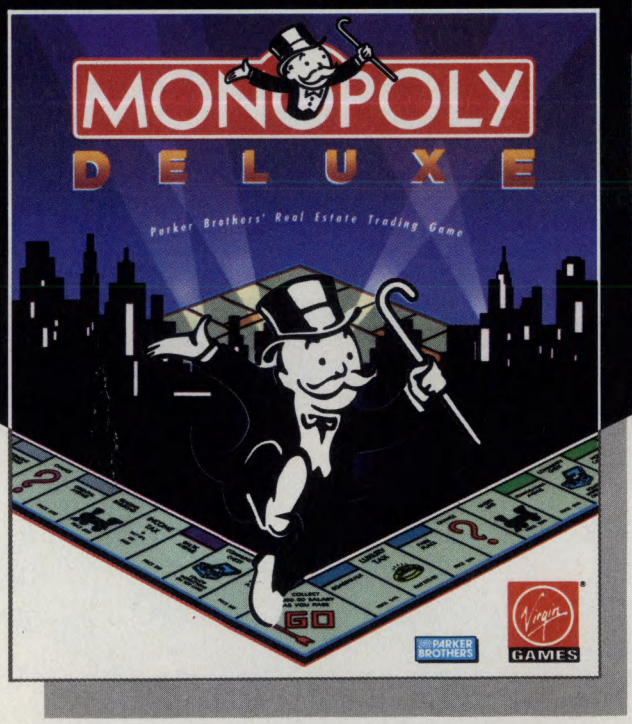

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OH WHAT JOY

STD's PC Fighter: Steven Wartofsky sticks it to you

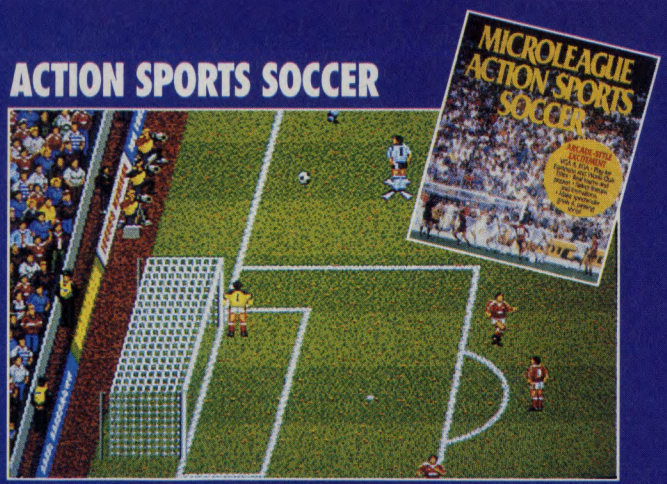
Even if arcade games aren't the focus of play on an IBM PC, there's still a need for a good joystick. Air combat simulations, racing simulations, sports games, and even some strategy, role-playing and adventure games make use of a joystick. The question is, what kind of stick is best for each of the above purposes? A wide range of design choices are available, in both analog and digital designs, and each have their strengths and weaknesses. We'll focus here on a particular piece of equipment by way of review, to start up some discussion of joystick design (to continue in future issues).

STD Entertainment has recently come out with a series of joysticks, which make use of standard spring-based switch technology to provide the kind of stiff, digital feel that's long been characteristic of the kinds of sticks available for 68000 based machines in Europe (Atari ST, Amiga, etc.). These digital joysticks potentially have a very precise feel to them; stick travel is minimal, and input is digital (either on or off). Digital input essentially means that increasing input in any particular direction of stick travel is time-based rather than distance-based. The clicking of the switches gives a clear signal as to whether an input has been made or not.

On a clearly analog stick, such as CH Products' FlightStick, the further in a particular direction the stick is pushed, the further in that direction the controlled object will move. This kind of control is equivalent to the kind of control available with a mouse, and is useful in programs where the precise location of the controlled object in relation to its environment is critical.

The limitation of analog control is that, though in one sense it is more precise, in that it will function as a kind of

ACTION SPORTS SOCCER



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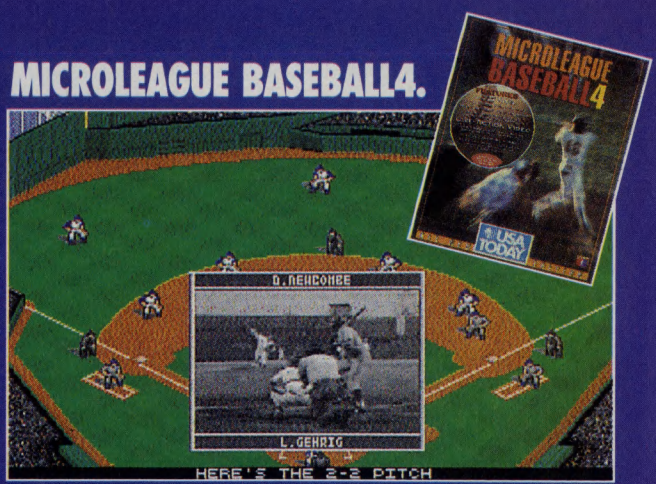

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MICRO

'virtual arm' being controlled within the gameworld, in fact under certain circumstances, with certain software, it can be more difficult to use. Imagine trying to do microsurgery with such a device and not being able to repress a sneeze and concomitant muscle-twitch, for instance (`sorry sir, we had to remove a few more organs due to the high pollen count this springtime...').

With a digital stick, input occurs only as long as the player is placing some kind of pressure on the stick in a particular direction; release of a digital stick halts any further input. Furthermore, initial input will be exactly the same in any direction the stick is pushed, and the extent of input will be controlled by the length of time the player is pushing in a particular direction. Depending on the software programming, the time the stick is pushed in a particular direction can result in either continuous, unchanging input into the program or in input which, over time, will increase. An example of the former would be something like pushing a baby carriage along a level sidewalk; and example of the latter might be pushing same carriage down an increasingly steep hill.

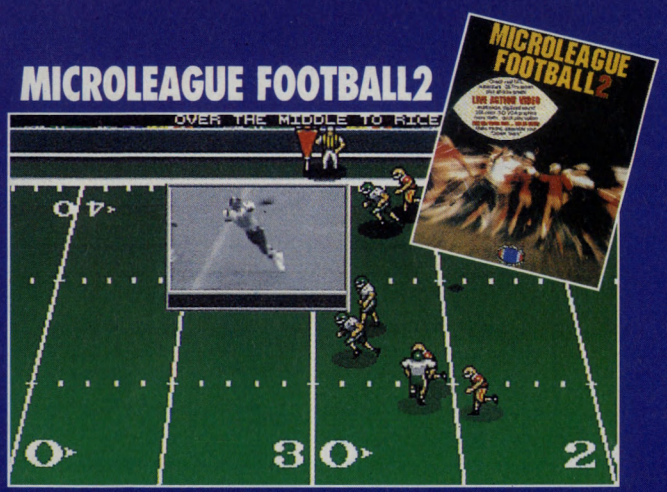
STD Entertainment's line of joysticks are digital. The PC Fighter is the top of line in terms of features, but like the other STD stick sent for comparison, is pretty basic in construction. The hand-grip is contoured as a fighter plane's controller might be, and the two fire buttons are located under the thumb and index finger, respectively. The plastic grip is wrapped around a reasonably solid plastic center, which in turn acts upon a series of small springs inside the stick to close or open the contacts. This kind of construction is not meant for long wear, compared with, say, a European design famous awhile ago called the Competition Pro. The latter stick has true microswitches, which are more like the switches used inside a mouse (but larger and heavier-duty). The PC Fighter's spring-based design is more prone to uneven wear and twisting.

There are two auto-fire switches (one for each button), which will function differently depending on the software. Usually auto-fire will allow the player to set continuous input from a button when it is held down; whereas when auto-fire is disabled each click of a button will produce only a single input. The base of the unit has four suction cups for firmly locating the joystick on a desk surface. Finally, a Normal and Reverse switch on the stick allows the player to switch which button produces which input. And an analog adjustment at the base of the stick controls sensitivity.

Bottom line is how the PC Fighter performs with different software. It does quite well with Dynamix' line of air combat simulations, as well as with **Chuck Yeager's Air Combat**, **F-117A**, and **Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe**.

It is also effective in digital mode with Accolade's recent **Grand Prix Unlimited**. It's less effective with other simulations, such as **FS4, Flight Assignment: Air Transport Pilot** and **Falcon 3.0**. These simulations, as well as **Indianapolis 500**, do best with a good analog joystick. The PC Fighter is a reasonable buy for those willing to pick up a throw-away stick for an economical price. Otherwise, look elsewhere. ❑

MICROLEAGUE FOOTBALL2



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Reader Service No. 53

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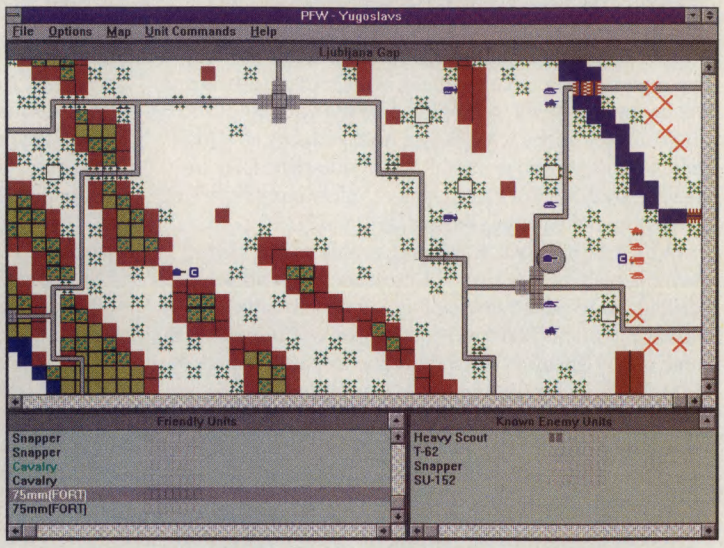

War on Windows

Risk

Published by
Virgin Games

Supports
Soundblaster

Players
1-6

Panzerkrieg for Windows

Designed by
D G Anderer and James Snellen

Published by
Blue Chip Computing

Players
2 only

Notes
Available as shareware. Full game available by post from:
Blue Chip Computing
PO Box 4634
Newark DE 19715
USA
Price $19.95 inc postage within US

Designed by a French film producer, named after the initials of the grandchildren of a Parker Brothers salesman, the venerable boardgame **RISK** has nothing if not an interesting history.

The first official computer version appeared a few years ago for the Amiga, Atari ST, and MS DOS. The best thing that could be said about this effort was that it contained most of the variants that have appeared throughout the years. Unfortunately it was let down by a poor computer opponent and a badly designed map. Curious then, that this new release for Windows offers a good computer opponent but no variants. The only way to play is total victory over all one's adversaries, the only option being a random setup instead of player choice.

The main drawback to the game, however, is still the map but for different reasons than hitherto. Previously when a territory was conquered the area would change color to resemble that of the invader. Now it is simply denoted by a tiny symbol representing the player's color. And I mean tiny. The practical effect of this is to make it almost impossible to see how many territories a player is holding. This is a crucial flaw as the information is vital when it comes to deciding which territories to attack and when - knocking a player out of the game means that the victor gains his cards. The old version would advise when a player was on the brink of doom. This worked fine, as would have a menu option stating number of territories held by each player. But now the only recourse is to squint at the monitor. Mystifying.

The full game being the only choice means that **RISK** in this incarnation is quite a long game, though not by computer standards. The problem is that the simplicity of the design does not justify this length. Towards the end, things degenerate into a 'die rolling' marathon and resultant tedium as new units pile onto the board.

As stated previously, the computer opponent plays more than respectably and for this alone the game can be recommended to **RISK** fanatics. Windows users, probably the real target audience rather than the strategy crowd, will also enjoy it I suspect. To say it could have been so much better is a cliche, but in this case more than appropriate. After all, there was a model to work from and from which some useful features could have been retained. But it was not to be.

Panzerkrieg for Windows was not designed by a French film producer, but does have the distinction of being the first out-and-out wargame designed for Windows. The first thing that becomes clear about the game is that the computer opponent is not a problem. There isn't one. **'PFW'** is designed to be played by humans only, via a modem, a LAN system, or at the same machine.

The full version (there is a shareware version containing seven scenarios which provide more than an excellent introduction to the game) contains 19 scenarios most of which are loosely based on WWII, plus there is a fantasy scenario. The gameplay could be summed up as 'move and shoot' but that would deceptively shallow. For within those parameters lie many of the options familiar to wargamers: line of sight, terrain modifiers, fire support and so forth. The scale of the game is tactical with each unit representing a platoon. An average scenario takes about three hours to complete.

The scenarios make no claim to historical accuracy, rather like a pared down version of **The Perfect General**. The map artwork and unit depiction leave something to be desired but it seems somewhat to churlish to criticise these in what is, after all, a budget game. Making up for this is the crisp Windows resolution and a rich variety of scenarios including one that doubles as a tutorial. The manual makes good use of DTP and is a model of clarity that many professional software houses could learn from. For wargamers who are not too fussed about flash graphics and in possession of a modem (and Windows, of course), **Panzerkrieg for Windows** is a must.

BrianWalker

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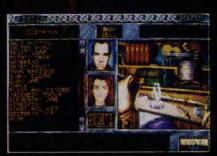

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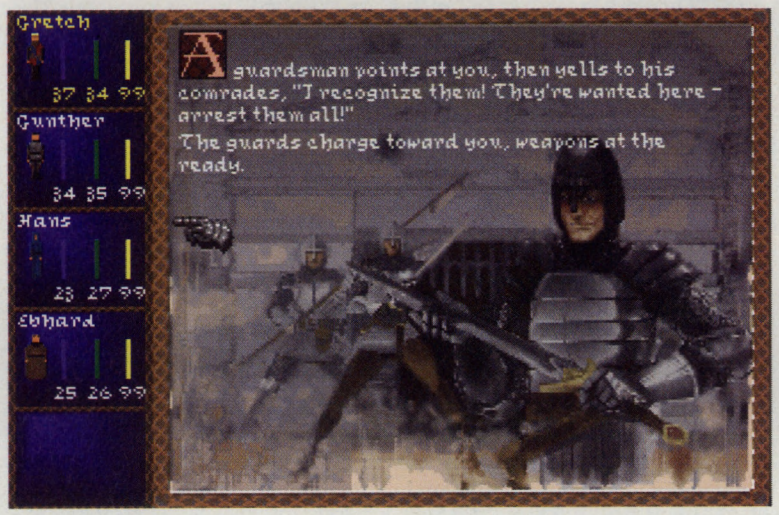
Reader Service No. 59

Darklands

Tale of the Century

by Steven Wartofsky


Gretch
37 34 99
Gunther
34 35 99
Hans
23 27 99
Ebhard
25 26 99
A guardsman points at you, then yells to his comrades, "I recognize them! They're wanted here - arrest them all!"
The guards charge toward you, weapons at the ready.

Designed by
Arnold Hendrick, Sandy Peterson, Doug Kaufman, Jim Synoski and Doug Whatley

Published by
Microprose

Systems
PC

PC Graphics
VGA 256 color only

Supports
Mouse, Keyboard,SoundBlaster, AdLib,Roland MT-32/ LAPC-I/CM-32L,Pro Audio Spectrum

Notes
Program uses16MB of hard disk space; concurrent use of QEMM and SMARTDRV not recommended.

Darklands has been a long time coming. A few hours spent with the game will reveal why: this is clearly one of the most innovative, dynamic and narratively complex RPGs yet to show on computer, and nothing short of a revolutionary rethinking of what computer role-playing should be all about is required to come to terms with the design.

Spiritual gossip

How does this manifest itself? Most importantly, designer Arnold Hendrick -and company have substituted a series of complex text trees for the frequently aimless wandering the player must do to find various locations in a town. Like **Sword of the Samurai**, which this aspect of the game faintly resembles, context-sensitive options arise in each town, allowing the player to equip the party, search for gossip and information, develop spiritual and alchemical skills, and sign on for various adventures.

The briefest of encounters might leave some players feeling disappointed at the presentation of a series of static (but beautifully illustrated) screens upon which these text options are superimposed; but further extensive exploration of the game makes it clear how much of an improvement this form of handling urban interaction is. Not only does it allow immediate movement from market to town square to political hall to inn, etc, but it also cuts down on the amount of object-tracking the program must do, thereby giving the designers significantly greater opportunities to vary the kinds of options and encounters available in any one town.

Village party

Options and encounters are context-sensitive because they are all contingent upon the player's local and general reputation. One of the primary goals of **Darklands** is to achieve a significant reputation across a large portion of the vast wastes of medieval Germany in the fifteenth century, and player actions affect the party's reputation both positively and negatively as the game progresses. It is possible, for instance, to get into a tussle with the village guards in one location, thus destroying the party's reputation in that village.

The results are that future attempts to enter the village are met with hostility and the threat of imprisonment, and the player must, if it's necessary to return to that village, find ingenious new ways to slip past the city's defenses to return. On the other hand, should players have the task of ridding a town of the threat posed by a nearby *raübritter*, and should they succeed, the party's reputation will rise significantly and further assignments and options will be forthcoming from that town.

These local economies of goods, weapons, armour, tasks, spells and such are widely scattered across a vast map incorporating most of what in the fifteenth century would have been called Greater Germany, including parts of Poland, Czechland and Slovakia, Burgundy, Switzerland and Belgium.

Different regions have different styles of terrain, different problems, different economies, even different weather patterns. Since each time the player begins a fresh game objects, adventures and problems are dynamically reconfigured (within the constraints of the above-mentioned differences), the combination of these territorialities with the engine's essential dynamism makes for an almost endlessly replayable system.

The player can start off focused on, say, the region of Württemberg, and draw upon the intellectual resources there and north to play a game centered around alchemy and spirituality. Or, alternately, the player can become a Westphalian or Hessian and gain reputation primarily for acts of military valor. Or anything in between: one of the joys of **Darklands** is that the system doesn't lock the player into one style of playing (or even the beginning configuration of the party), so that as any particular game progresses shifts in focus and perspective can be made.

In fact, such shifts can be motivated by the development of one's party. As with many CRPGs, initial, beginner-style play will most likely focus on developing the party's military might first.

Once the party is capable of surviving the odd onslaught of wild boars, wolves, thieves, and other nomadic hordes, attention can be paid to alchemical skill. Then, finally, pursuing knowledge of the saints and their spiritual and magical powers can become

paramount, giving the player a wide variety of ways to achieve valor.

Top ranking

The course of the party's success can be contingent on the type of party the player begins with, as with most CRPGs. The extensive character development system allows creation of characters with a wide range of skills and abilities, or with heavy emphasis on particular capabilities. Character development operates within the metaphor of first defining the character's intrinsic abilities at birth, and then 'bringing them up' through a wide array of different careers, where they can learn different skills. Characters are also developed as peasants, nobility, merchants and so on, and it's possible to use social ranking and hierarchy to focus the character's skills in certain areas, along with career choices. **Darklands** complements these aspects of the design with a party management and combat system that is a real pleasure to use.

Combat is an interesting combination of SSI-style small-scale tactical wargaming and real-time **Ultima**-like contest; the player's party of up to five characters can be given commands at any point during a particular encounter, and the progress of the encounter can be paused at any point by hitting the spacebar. What this means is that the party characters function based on a combination of choices made by the computer and the player; for instance, if a character is given orders to attack a particular opponent but is assaulted from another direction, those orders will be disobeyed so the character can defend itself.

Similarly, once a character has dispatched its assigned opponent, it will come to the aid of other characters in their struggle. No-one in the party is left sitting around gaping unless the player explicitly orders them to, and no-one is automatically locked into combat to the death with an opponent by the computer. A wide range of different fight or flight options are available for each party member, so that the course of the battle in any particular encounter can be managed in as much detail as the player wants.

Nap hand

This all has some of the merits of one my all-time favorite command-based wargames, SSI's **Waterloo**, in that there's a very realistic 'hands-on' feel imparted to battle by the fact that commands are issued but not inevitably carried out. Also, the computer generates opponents that use a wide variety of tactics; sometimes the party will have to deal with a two-fronted attack, sometimes the attack comes bunched, sometimes it is spread out. This requires careful consideration of classic wargaming issues like facing, formation, and use of local terrain features. It makes the surprise of an encounter in the wildernesses beyond the towns (or in the streets of towns at night!) something to look forward to instead of something to dread.

Beyond encounters in the wilderness, or on the streets of a city or town, there are certain battles which take place in dungeons or mines, and which involve solving a series of puzzles along the way. All battles occur from an isometric overhead perspective, but in the dungeons or mines this becomes a critical factor in party management.

Certain portions of a mine might require the party to walk in single file, thus exposing the characters in front to any traps or encounters that might occur. Sometimes it becomes amusingly difficult to rearrange one's party in a narrow hall; everybody gets stuck trying to squeeze past each other and get back in formation (selecting a new party leader at one end of the hall solves this problem). Other times it is crucial to enter new areas of the mine carefully, so that should opponents suddenly appear, the party will be positioned effectively to deal with them.

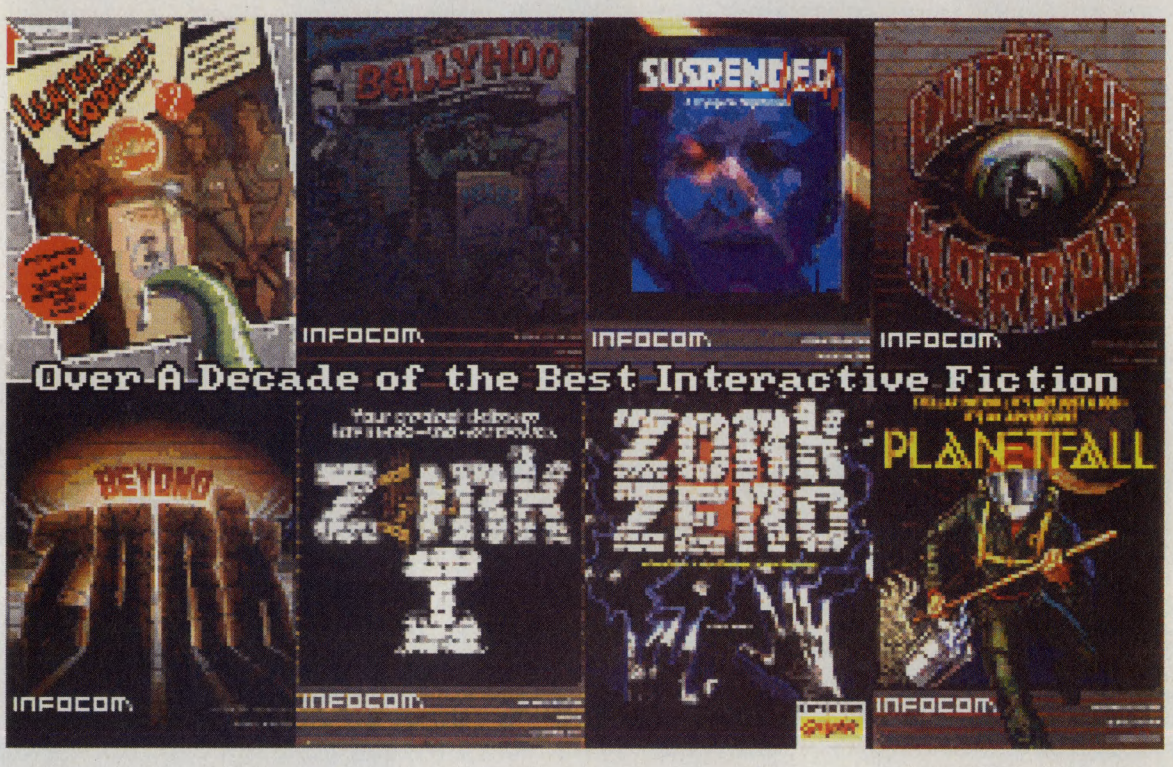
Rhine gem

Darklands works well with a combination of mouse and keyboard input; play occurs pretty seamlessly once some familiarization with the game system has taken place. There are certain minor irritations in the design, such as the fact that one must quit the game and restart to recover from a line of play that has proven ineffective; or that there's nothing stopping a player from accidentally selling weapons and armor being worn if careful attention isn't being paid. Overall, I find **Darklands** to be one of the most satisfying and engrossing RPGs I've yet played. The loving detail paid to the mood and history of fifteenth-century Germany alone is worth paying the price of the game to discover. ❑

Gretch
37 34 99
Gunther
34 35 99
Hans
23 27 99
Ebhard
25 26 99
Blood pounding in your ears, you dash forward into the city. You run around a corner and down a small alley.

THE INFOCOM ADVENTURE

Theo Clarke whips some leather goddesses while unearthing lost treasures



The Lost Treasures of Infocom

Written by
Lots of people

Published by
Activision

Systems
Amiga PC Macintosh

Graphics
Mono

Supports
Keyboard

Notes
Includes

hint books and maps

Games included
Zork, Beyond Zork, Zork Zero, Enchanter, Sorcerer, Spellbreaker, Deadline, Witness, Suspect, Ballyhoo, Moonmist, Lurking Horror, Infidel, Suspended, Planetfall, Stationfall, Starcross, The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, The Leather Goddesses of Phobos

Talk to any text adventure game player and they will start to wax nostalgic about a golden age. In the eighties there was a company called Infocom which was founded on campus at MIT. Infocom survived little more than five years, before the arrival of graphics adventures critically reduced the size of the market for text adventures. For a while their games were in limbo but then Mediagenic, trading as Activsion, bought the rights to all their games. Mediagenic\Activision subsequently became involved in a losing legal brawl with Magnavox (Phillips) but were rescued by The Disc Company who retained both the Activison and Infocom names. The new Activision has gathered all twenty of these games into a single package as **The Lost Treasures of Infocom.** The package includes a full hint book and maps.

Par for the source

Before 1983 text adventures had two word parsers. Every instruction consisted of a verb and a noun. GET BOOK. DROP FROG. The first adventure game was called **Adventure** and ran on IBM mainframes. It became known as **Colossal Caves** or **The Hobbit**, and was influenced by **Dungeons and Dragons**. Dozens of similar games were soon available on microcomputers. The precursor to **Zork** was a mainframe game written by Dave Lebling and Marc Blank at MIT in 1977. In 1983 Infocom published **Zork** the parser of which handled complete sentences.

Zork was another fantasy adventure. It contained witty references to **Adventure** and introduced the grue to gaming vocabulary. The game is set in the remains of a Great Underground Empire called Quendor. The object of the game is to locate the empire's treasures and put them in a trophy case. A thief has the same idea and will pick up and move items that the player has seen but not taken, all of which makes mapping quite eventful.

Zork was followed by two sequels: **Beyond Zork** was also about the lands of Quendor, but it was written by Brian Moriarty who went on to become the driving force behind Lucasfilm Games. Moriarty is more literate than his colleagues and this shows in his games. **Beyond Zork** was the first Infocom game in which a player could define their character in terms of six attributes just as one does in role-playing games. The game was awash with cross-references to other Infocom products.

The last Zork game was a prequel from Steve Meretzky. **Zork Zero** was set at the time of the fall of the Great Underground Empire and the player can contribute to its downfall. The intermittent attention of the Court

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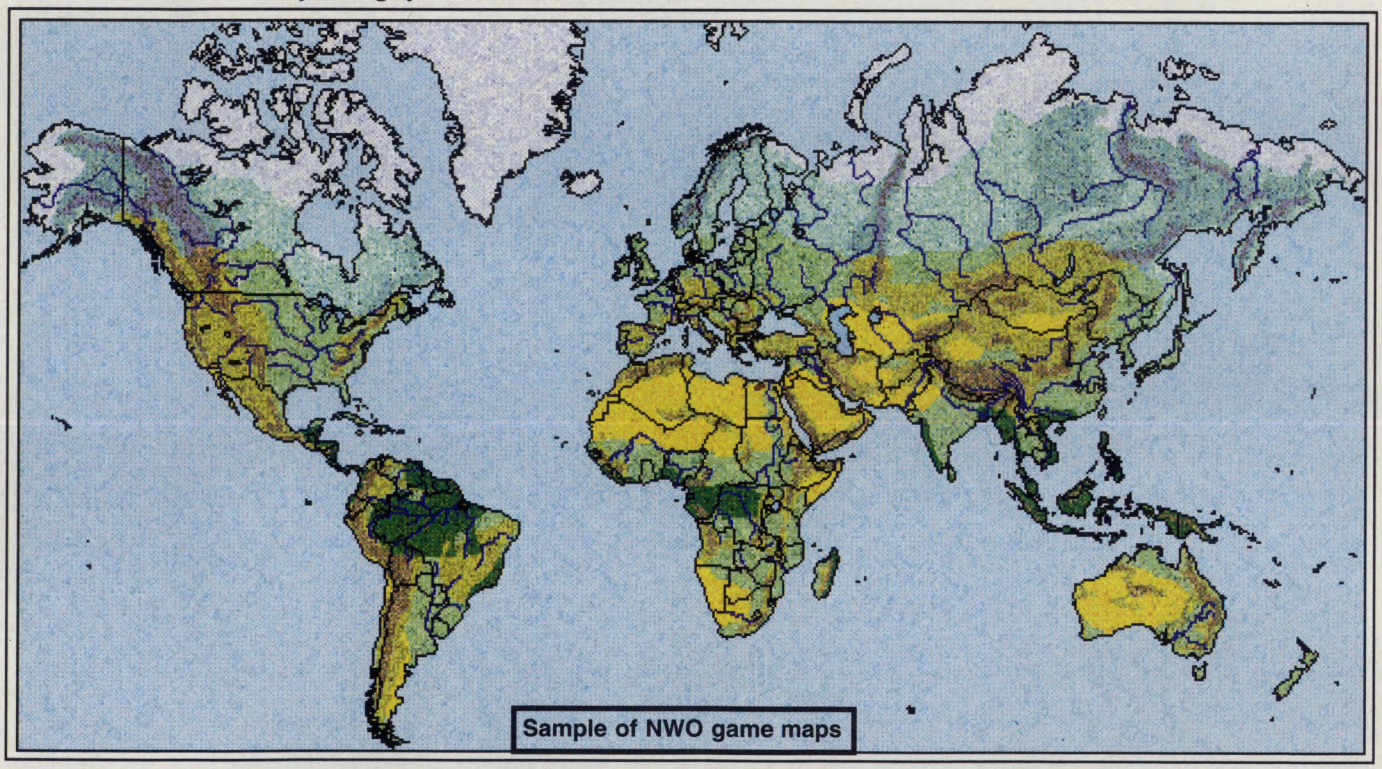

Sample of NWO game maps

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Jester lends the game the absurdity that we now expect of the man who is currently the star in the crown of Legend Software.

Sorcerer's apprentice

After the Zork trilogy Lebling and Blank collaborated on another fantasy adventure. **Enchanter** was set in a world of magic. An evil Warlock has taken over the land and defeated all that oppose him. No recognized Enchanter can assail him so the guild of magicians send in an apprentice. The player is the apprentice sent to beat the Warlock. The same apprentice is the star of **Sorcerer**, Steve Meretzky's sequel. The leader of the guild is kidnapped by an evil demon must be rescued. Dave Lebling completed the **Enchanter** trilogy with a final Manichean conflict in **Spellbreaker**.

Marc Blank's next project was a unique mystery. A wealthy industrialist appears to have committed suicide within his locked library but his attorney suspects murder. The player is the Chief of Detectives asked to investigate the case and there are only twelve hours in which to solve the case. Twelve real hours. Every command takes at least one minute. The player has a **Deadline**.

Another Infocom detective mystery with a twelve-hour deadline was Stu Galley's **Witness**. Galley is another MIT graduate and founder of Infocom. In **Witness** the player must find the killers of Bob Lundstrom, who had sought police protection after receiving phoned death threats.

Dave Lebling also wrote a third deadlined murder mystery game but he had the police as supporting characters. In **Suspect** the main protagonist is a journalist who is framed for murder. Mysteries are ideal material for adventure games but they do not have to involve murder. **Ballyhoo** was set in a circus where the owner's daughter has been kidnapped and **Moonmist** is a combined ghost story and treasure hunt.

Lurking Horror is a high technology horror story by Dave Lebling. It is set on a college campus that has been snowed in. As usual it is liberally peppered with self-referential Infocom jokes. The game's title is derived from the description of a grue and the name of the college is another Infocom in-joke.

Residual problems

Not all Infocom games were exercises in sophisticated self-referential silliness. Some, like Michael Berlyn's **Infidel** were pure atmospheric thrillers. In this case the player is an adventurer seeking to find and loot a lost pyramid. Berlyn's **Suspended** was another relatively solemn game in which the player is the central intelligence of an automated planet where things are going awry. The player cannot move but there are six robots with limited but complementary functions that are the only tools available to save the planet.

Planetfall and **Stationfall** were two more science fiction games. Both were mock heroic space opera material from Meretzky. In the first game the player is forced to abandon a space ship and crash on the mysterious planet of Resida. Solving the planet's secret and saving it from oblivion leads to promotion for the second game. **Starcross** was Lebling's science fiction story for Infocom. Two hundred years hence a black hole miner will encounter a giant space ship from beyond our solar system.

To many adventure game players the pinnacle of Infocom's achievement was **The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy**. This was written by Meretzky with Douglas Adams and was derived from the eponymous cult radio and television series and is a surreal masterpiece.

The twenty games in the anthology are not a complete collection and they are not the best twenty but almost any Infocom game is preferable to almost any other text adventure. Activision will also be publishing a second bundle to complete the collection, but in the meantime, this is the best value that obtainable from any box of games outside a public domain collection.

All shook up

Despite all the traumas Infocom, unlike Elvis, lives. In 1990 the severely underrated **Circuit's Edge** appeared under the Infocom auspices and now, belatedly, comes the sequel to the infamous **Leather Goddesses of Phobos**. The original **'Leather Goddesses'** Infocom adventure was published on the Infocom label in 1986. Its wit was typical of Meretsky's previous games but it had the added ingredient of sexual innuendo. A major marketing issue was that the game could be played in Tame, Suggestive or Lewd mode. Infocom games were justly renowned for their innovative packaging. **Leather Goddesses** came with a 3D comic and the necessary 3D glasses. It also contained a Scratch'n'Sniff pad that is referred to throughout the game.

A budget version of **Leather Goddesses of Phobos** was published in 1990 by Virgin Games (UK only) This

Leather Goddesses of Phobos 2: Gas Pump Girls Meet the Pulsating Inconvenience From Planet X!

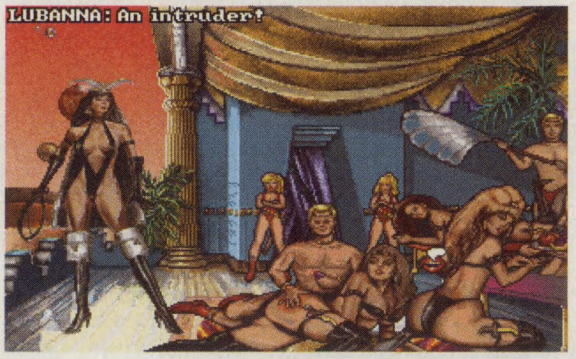
Designed by
Steve Meretsky

Published by
Activision

Systems
PC

Graphics
EGA, VGA/MCGA or Tandy

Supports
Music Roland, AdLib, PS-1, Pro Audio Spectrum or Soundblaster
Speech: SoundBlaster, SoundBlaster Pro, Pro Audio Spectrum, Thunder Board, Disney Sound Mouse, joystick or keyboard



edition was very cheap but did not contain any of the smart packaging. It did include on-line hints, however, and the story itself remained unchanged. The entire game filled half a 360K floppy disk but the challenge lasted for days.

It is now 1956. The Leather Goddesses of Phobos have decided to use the Solar System's tenth planet, Planet X, as their base for their latest assault on Earth. One of the technologically advanced inhabitants of Planet X comes to Earth to seek help but his spaceship crashes near the home of Zeke Zarmen, son of Trent. Zeke is friendly with Lydia Sandler, daughter of an astronomer who recently discovered Planet X. They are friendly towards the alien but the authorities take a more belligerent attitude.

The player can be male, female or alien by choosing Zeke, Lydia Barthgub el Nikki-Nikki, Son of Jelgobar el Zayda-Zayda. The objective is to get Barthgub and his spaceship fit to travel, return to Planet X and then on to Phobos to stick a second spanner in the works of the Leather Goddesses.

Pump up the volume

Leather Goddesses of Phobos 2: Gas Pump Girls Meet the Pulsating Inconvenience From Planet X! comes on ten high density diskettes and takes half an hour to install. The large size is a result of the use of fast high-resolution graphics and extensive digitized sound. All of this makes the gameplay very attractive. The game is a first person graphic adventure. The player sees the world from the character's point of view. Most graphic adventures are third person. First person graphics increase the player's emotional involvement, knowing that there death is impossible and that there are no cul-de-sacs adds further interest.

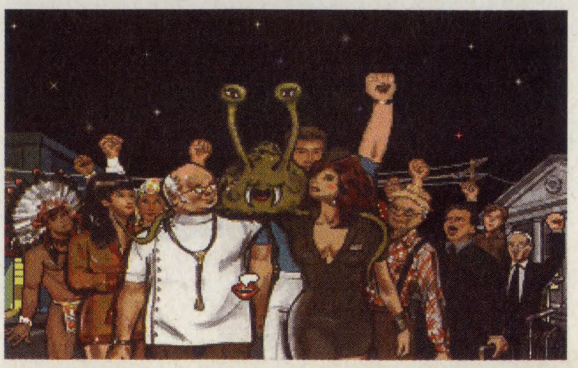
The user interface is a deceptively simple intelligent cursor which indicates how the player may interact with the indicated object. The clear graphics and the quality of the animation make this very simple to use. Choosing to talk to a character changes the interface. The screen fills with a head shot and a column of icons for greeting, topics to discuss and interpersonal activities. The speech is well-performed and the sound is high quality. The voices show neat characterization and I particularly enjoyed listening to Barth struggle with human language.

As a reviewer I have an unusually broad range of hardware. Part of my set-up is a stereo mixer to control the output from my various sound devices. Most people only have one sound device, however, even though an increasing number of games use two. Infocom have handled this excellently with this game. The package includes a Life Size Sound Enhancer which runs off a printer port in the same way as the Disney Sound Source. The digitized sound from this is quite acceptable and enables one-card players to use their original card for the music. The music is the standard adventure implementation of a tune per room. The melodies are neither irritating nor remarkable, but they cut abruptly as the player moves from place to place.

Beyond bonk

Half an hour to clear fifteen mega-bytes of space on the hard disk. Half an hour to install the game. It doesn't leave much of the evening, does it? This is probably just as well. The game does not contain a full evening's play. The manual mentions that the Barth persona has fewer puzzles to solve than the humans but even the humans have little more to do and their stories are almost identical. Are we supposed to spend more time gurgling with adolescent glee at the sexual activities? I am sure that I spent as much time as I could on the gurgling. I leered at the beautiful women and their big breasts. I admired the beefcake men and I pressed the bonk button. I found most of this funny and I enjoyed what I saw but it all ended too soon.

LGOP2 feels like the offspring of Legend's **Spellcasting** series and Accolade's Les Manley series. It is funny and entertaining but it lacks the charm that it needs to compensate for its lack of challenge. The label that refuses to die continues on its merry way then, even if some of the old magic has been lost. Just how permanent this loss is we'll be able to gauge better when Activision release **Return to Zork** next year. ❑



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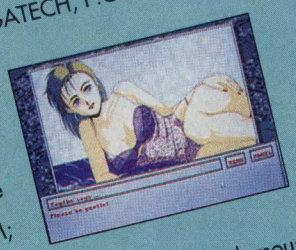

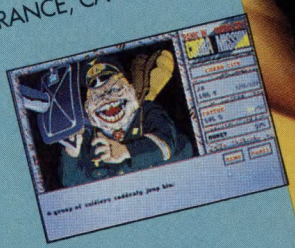

ACTUAL VGA SCREEN IMAGES

System requirements: 286 or faster machine with 640K RAM; hard disk with min. 12 megabytes of available space required, mouse recommended. Graphics compatible with EGA, MCGA and VGA (VGA highly recommended).

Sound support: Sound Blaster Pro, Adlib Gold

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R RATED R (This program is voluntarily rated due to the partially violent and adult nature of the graphic imagery.) This program is intended for mature audiences only!!! No sales to minor under 18 and where prohibited by law.

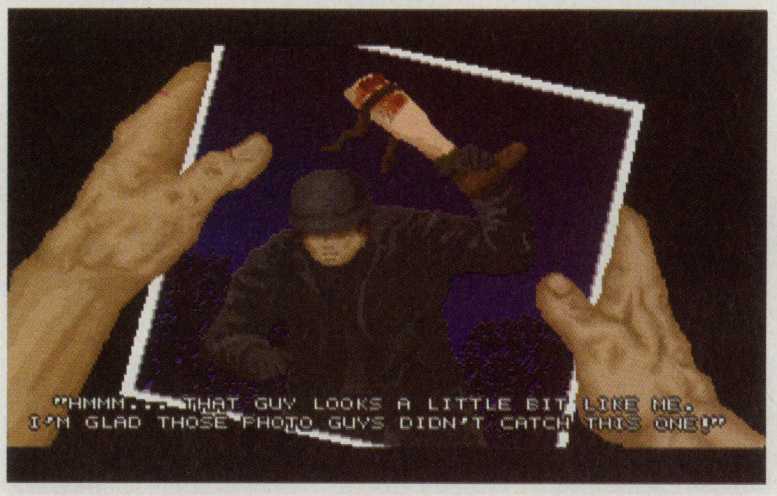
BOND WAS HOT STUFF.
SO WAS ARNOLD.
NOW IT'S YOUR TURN.

MEGATECH

The Dark Half

Misery loves company

By Joseph Boone



Published by
Capstone

Systems
PC

Graphics
256 color VGA

Supports
Mouse, most soundcards

Notes
Based on a novel by Stephen King

The Dark Half lives up to the tradition that seems to have been established when Stephen King books are translated to other media. While there have been a few successful efforts, such as the film version of *Misery*, the majority have been uninspired and mediocre at best. *The Dark Half* is a captivating book that is hard to put down. If the computer game adaptation were food, it would be hard to keep down.

Twin freaks

The game begins with an introduction that does little to explain either the story background or objectives. A surgeon finds an eye and some teeth in a patient's brain, makes a vague reference to a twin that has not been absorbed, and then we see a shot of some birds flying away. Ahhh, of course. Birds flying. Twins absorbing. It's all so clear to me now.

The next development in the story has 23 years passing with the patient, Thad Beaumont, growing up to become a writer who uses the pen name George Stark. When Thad decides to retire the Stark pseudonym he gets a little surprise. It seems that George is actually Thad's unabsorbed twin. Stark somehow comes to life in an effort to force Thad to teach him how to write. The final twist is that if Thad does teach George how to write he will die and George will take his place.

While the book is careful to lay a foundation for each of these revelations, the game merely throws them out as if each one were a self-evident truth. Presented in this fashion, each development seems more unbelieveable than the last and it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain the suspension of disbelief that is critical to the success of all fiction.

Vanilla twice

Putting aside any problems with the story and its presentation, there is gameplay to consider. The interface uses a point and click foundation but adds an interesting twist. Commands are selected from a menu that is designed to resemble a typewriter.

Aside from that there is little worthy of note in the game engine. It is a vanilla system that has been seen in many games before.

The graphics in **The Dark Half** are adequate to represent the objects and characters but far from exceptional. The best graphics seen here are not up to the quality as those from Sierra's least attractive games. The music and sound are on a similar level: acceptable but nothing that hasn't been done better in other games. The overall effect of the sound and graphics is to create a gaming environment that is dull and uninspired gameplay.

Don't get Thad...

Of course, the heart of any adventure game is the set of puzzles required to complete it. **The Dark Half** fails here because it is both too linear and not linear enough. It is linear in the way that it requires certain actions to be performed in a certain order and at a certain time. It is not linear enough in that it allows a player to leave an area or finish a day without doing everything required. If one were allowed to simply go back and make things right it wouldn't be so bad. Unfortunately, there are too many actions that can not be re-done correctly or done at a time later than they are supposed to be. The result is that the player must either restore to an earlier save or start over if necessary.

Finally, we arrive at the character development and interaction portion of the game. Or we would if there were one. Readers of the book may be curious to see how sheriff Alan Pangborn and Thad's wife Liz were portrayed. Well, Pangborn is non-existent and Liz is all but invisible. Thad's connection with other human beings seems to consist of asking them for clues or talking the police out of arresting him. During all of this, Thad exhibits all the charm and personality of a wet sponge.

The Dark Half has little to recommend it. The story is sketchy, muddled, and confusing. The graphics and music are two years behind the times. The characters are all pure cardboard. The puzzles are neither forgiving nor terribly logical. It is very difficult to make a game with no outstanding features but Capstone proved to be up to the challenge. ❑

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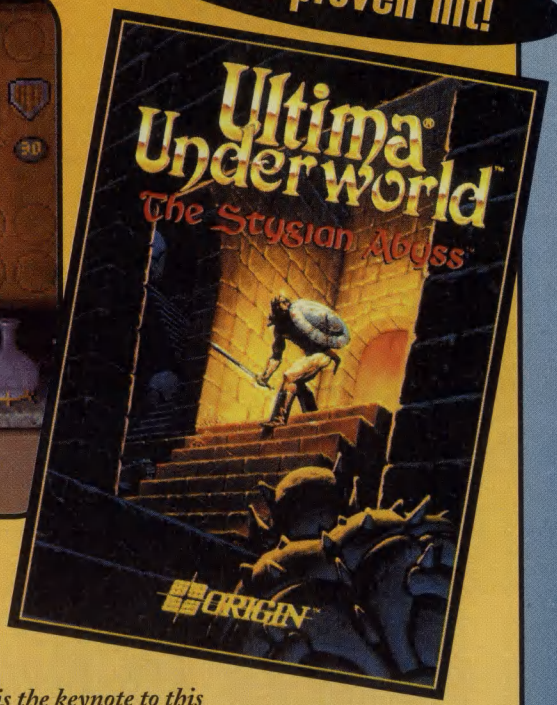

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Designed by
Dennis Cunningham

Published by
Dennis Cunningham

Systems
PC

Graphics
Mono only

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T-Zero

An adventure for the time being

By Theo Clarke

Waking up beside a river is an innoccuous way to open an adventure. Waking up beside a river after being fired from a job as a librarian and museum custodian is even less auspicious. Being fired by Count Zero, for being prone to sweeping subatomic particles under the carpet along with the dust, has a certain cachet, however.

This is the beginning of Dennis Cunningham's unique text adventure **T-Zero: An Adventure for the Time Being.** The tone of the game is foreshadowed by the suggestion that 'you can be as calculating as the Count'. Anyone who fails to recognise the pun immediately is going to have very serious problems with the rest of the game.

T-Zero is not huge. It has less than a hundred items and a similar number of rooms but it is ferociously complex to solve because of the leaps of imagination required. For instance, there is a field of stones to the west of the starting position. The stones look as though they can be overturned. Turning over stones has no real effect but the key phrase "Leave no stone unturned" reveals a useful item.

The game is packed with such visual and verbal trickery as the player travels through past, present, future and future imperfect. Indeed, it would be too packed were it not for the extensive context-sensitive hints that can assist a bewildered player. There is also a powerful parser that indicates the exact word that causes any misunderstanding.

Violets that shrink

This game was a labour of love for its creator. Every part of it is finely crafted. The descriptions are redolent of care and the artifacts display an absurdly active imagination. What do Shrinking Violets do? Why do a Cocklope, a Hippoquatch and a Rinpillar live in the maze? Presumably they did not buy the registered version and are lost in there without a walkthrough.

Wandering around in the present uncovers all manner of items, locations and clues but it is increasingly clear that the game's future is in the past. Going back in time is no simple matter and it seems unlikely that anyone will complete the game without wearing the walkthrough pages soft from wear.

To fully appreciate this game the buyer will need to be a peripatetic polymath of the sort that enjoys Lewis Carroll, Cyberpunk, Hitch-Hikers' Guide to the Galaxy and T S Eliot. Not some of them. All of them. There cannot be many such people but the select few will adore **T-Zero**. ❑

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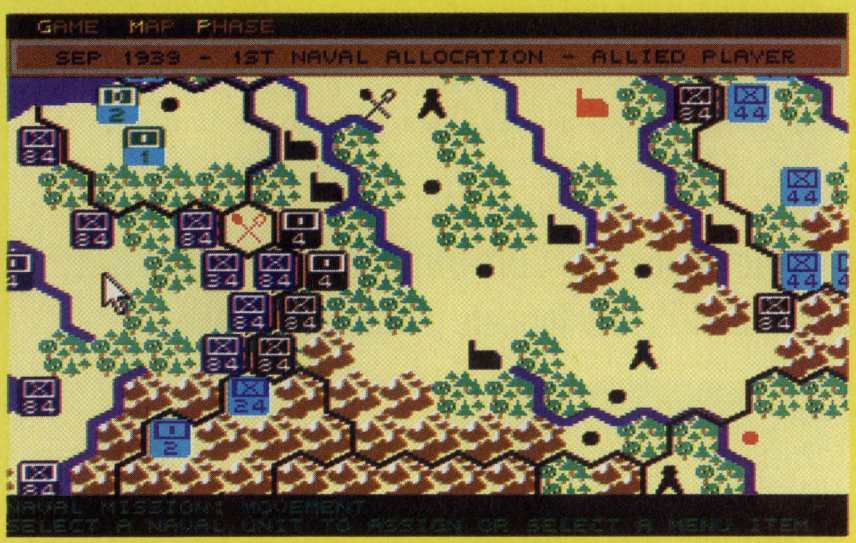

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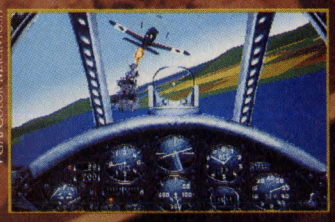

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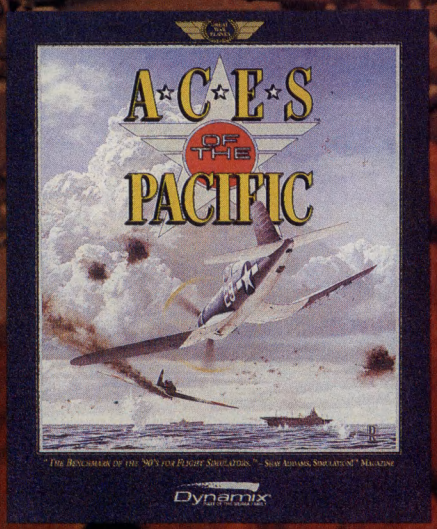
A Damon Slye SIMULATION



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BLOCK BUSTERS

Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis

Designed by
LucasArts Entertainment Company

Published by
LucasArts Entertainment Company

Systems
PC or compatible

Graphics
VGA/MCGA, 256 colours.

Supports
Mouse, keyboard, and joystick; AdLib, Roland, Sound Blaster, and SoundMaster II sound cards.

Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis

Indiana Jones fans, take heart! Although there may not be any more motion pictures featuring the rough and ready globe trotting archaeologist, Indy is back in a brand new adventure from LucasArts Games: ***Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis****.*

At the beginning of the game, we find Indy at Barnett College, retrieving an old artifact for a mysterious Mr. Smith. When Smith makes off with the artifact, we discover that he is really Klaus Kerner, a Nazi agent. Kerner leaves behind a clue pointing to Sophia Hapgood, a former colleague of Dr. Jones who gave up archaeology to become a psychic. Indy seeks her out, and finds her lecturing to sold-out crowds about the glorious Lost City of Atlantis, guided by the spirit of Nur-Ab-Sal, an ancient Atlantean king.

*Partway through the game, '****Fate of Atlantis****' branches into three different paths, each offering a distinctive style of play: In the Team path, Indy and Sophia must work together to overcome the obstacles set in their path. In the Wits path, Indy ventures forth alone, thinking his way through the various puzzles as he searches for the Lost City. In the Fists path, there is less emphasis on puzzle solving; instead, the player must guide Indy through the occasional arcade-like boxing sequence in order to advance. The player may choose a game style that best suits his tastes or abilities. In the Team and Wits paths, it is possible for Indy to complete the game without fighting, relying on smooth talk to get himself out of a jam; however, Indy can still duke it out if the player wishes. The multi-path feature also improves the replay value of the game, since each path leads to different plot situations, presenting the player with new challenges.*

Fate of Atlantis *is a feast for the eyes, with vibrant 256-colour artwork and a lavish attention to detail. The backgrounds are beautifully done, with many clever spot animations. The motion of on-screen characters seems more fluid than in past Lucasfilm adventure games. Watch for the occasional visual in-joke, such as the LucasArts logo on the walls of the labyrinth in Crete.*

The stunning visuals are paired with an equally impressive sound-track, implemented using LucasArts iMUSE Electronic Music System. Rich, mood-setting background music accompanies nearly all parts of the game, providing a strong cinematic feel to the adventure.

The puzzles in ***Fate of Atlantis*** *fall into the intermediate range of difficulty. The game is refreshing because, although a hint book is available, there seems little reason to buy one. Most of the puzzles can be solved with some straightforward thinking - and sometimes a bit of perseverance. This is a refreshing change from some games, which cannot be solved by any amount of logical reasoning. But for players to whom logical reasoning is anathema, the following should be of assistance.*

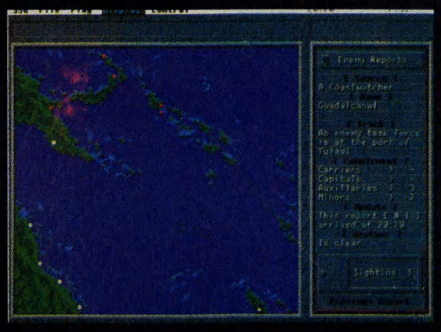
Tips

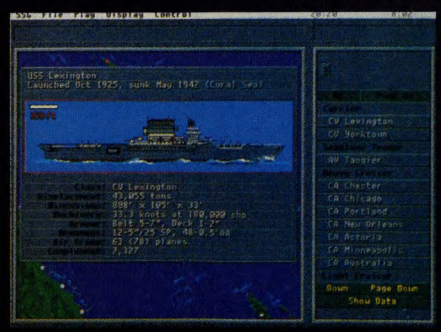
Be inquisitive. Look at everything. One effective technique is to click on the 'Look'. button, and then sweep the cursor back and forth across the screen. When the cursor passes over a special object, the 'Look at...' text above the game controls will change to identify the object. This trick is especially useful when there is no light to see by; the 'Look' button becomes a 'Touch' button in that case.

Open everything that's closed, and close everything that's open. Empty objects are not always what they seem. Have Indy pick up every loose object he can carry; most (but not all) of them will be useful.

Save often. Although it is difficult for Indy to be killed in **Fate of Atlantis**, some puzzles require a bit of effort to complete. By saving the game more frequently, less time is wasted should it become necessary to redo certain actions. This becomes especially true near the end of the game.

When stuck, have Indy talk to Sophia if she is near. Her response will usually indicate whether more tasks remain to be done at the present location, or whether it's time for them to move on. Pay attention to the action sequence in





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The Four Crystals of Trazere

Published by
The Software Toolworks

Systems
PC Amiga ST
PC Graphics VGA

Supports
Most popular soundcards

Notes
In the UK this game was published by Mindscape under the title Legend

the opening credits. It will provide important clues for Indy to use later on. Read the Lost Dialogue carefully. The information in the book is crucial to the successful completion of the game.

The following hints describe specific game situations, 'real' adventurers may wish to skip them.

Don't worry about Professor Sternhart's abrupt departure from Tikal - his path will cross with Indy's again before the game ends.

Monte Carlo is a big place; fortunately, Monsieur Trottier is well-known there. If Indy talks to enough people, they should be able to describe Trottier well enough for Indy to recognise him on the street.

In the bustling streets of Algiers, it's almost impossible to follow someone without losing them in the crowd - everybody looks the same. Well, *nearly* everybody.

Omar al-Jabbar is a helpful fellow in the Team path; but in the Wits path, he's downright disagreeable - and a lousy host, to boot. Indy won't have free run of the house, so long as Omar is hovering nearby.

When travelling in the desert, Indy may find it helpful to stop and ask directions of the local inhabitants from time to time. An item of reference will help.

When surveying in the Cretan ruins, have Indy examine each pile of stones. This will help him to find suitable places to set up the transit. A careful search of the ruins will provide a clue to help Indy point the transit.

In the labyrinth in Crete, be sure to use the orichalcum detector in the chambers beyond the map room, after eliminating any interference from items Indy may be carrying.

When on the submarine on the Team path, remember: what the captain says, goes! The right orders will keep Indy from bumping into curious crew members.

In the Team path, Indy also pilots the sub. Some of the objects visible on the ocean floor are 'closer' to the screen than others. (Others are really far away!) To travel toward them, the sub must be at the same depth as the object, *and* at the same distance from the screen. By careful steering, the sub can be moved closer to the screen, or farther away. A little practice will do the trick. In the Wits path, Indy can't get off the sub through the usual exit. But with a little creative thinking, he can be off like a shot!

The Atlanteans built their machinery well: Most of it still works, if someone can provide the power. Some machines have broken down over the ages, and will have to be fixed first. Fortunately, many of them have interchangeable parts--and some of them will even use makeshift parts! Some items can be used in more than one machine, so make sure Indy hangs onto them.

Indy can run the orichalcum machine as many times as he wants, as long as raw materials are available. Two or three times will provide a good supply.

To enter Atlantis' inner circle, Indy has to repair and operate a major piece of machinery. It's not as hard as it looks, especially if he can find the 'owner's manual' first.

In the inner circle of the Lost City, pay close attention to the surroundings especially the walls. Indy won't be able to 'spring' Sophia until the game is nearly complete. Luckily, she's not going anywhere. Good luck, and don't forget the bullwhip.

Lee Johnson

The Four Crystals of Trazere

As I struggled through this real-time computer role playing game, I likewise struggled with my feelings about it. The animated graphics made the characters and monsters look great, and the spells flew like fireworks. The three dimensional skewed view used in combat and in the dungeons was good, but it was difficult to spot items on the floor. The magic system allows the Runemaster in the party to construct customized spells, and the game has some intriguing puzzles that must be solved with strange magic combinations.

*In **Four Crystals of Trazere**, the player controls a party of four who are drawn from the 'standard' classes - Berserker, Troubador, Runemaster, and Assassin. There is very little difference in the character development from the earliest RPG's: each class has unique abilities - fighting frenzy, magical songs, spellcasting, backstab and hide-in-shadows. There is little plot and no other characters to interact with, clues are found on the dungeon walls or gleaned from a bartender.*

Unfortunately, the game runs very fast on a 386 25 Mhz machine, making combat very difficult. Players may become frustrated as they try to control all four characters in battle, aim spells and direct attacks all at once. If the unwary player tries to play this game on a fast computer, I suggest trying to find a utility to slow the machine down before proceeding too far.

*Eventually, the game breaks down into a sequence of one 'hack and slash' skirmish after another. Although I looked forward to the occasional puzzle, even these weren't enough to carry me through the game. Perhaps the producers will try putting the graphics, spells, and puzzles seen in **Four Crystals** into their next effort which hopefully will include a real story line.*

Tips

The game proceeds in a very linear fashion, with the monsters in each successive dungeon becoming more powerful. The path will usually be very clear, if players is ever at a dead-end he should talk to any bartender. They should be certain to write all clues down, as they are never repeated.

The Cellar of the Guild in Treihadwyl is the first dungeon, the party will find a permit to see the King here.

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Curse of Enchantia is available on Commodore Amiga (1 meg only) and IBM PC compatibles.

Screen shots from IBM PC version.

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Collect all objects found to sell in the shops, during the first parts of the game gold will in short supply for training, prayer, runes, reagents and Troubador songs.

The first puzzle that involves a custom spell is found on the second level of the Cellar, the towers shoot their fireballs a distance proportional to how 'hard' the Runemaster hits the damage tile in the southwest corner. Cast a 'Missile-Damage' followed by a 'Missile-Damage-Damage' to complete the path across to the lever. Pulling the lever turns the tower, then the player should experiment with the two spells and note how they affect the tower launchers and the floor tiles.

Solving some of the puzzles requires good timing, strategy and luck. To open the chest on level one of Fagranc in the room filled with teleporting floor tiles, try positioning three characters on the east side of the chest. Have the character at the north end open the chest, he should be blocked from the trapped tile by the other two party members. If that doesn't work, it may be necessary to cast a paralyze spell on the characters to prevent them from moving out of the way.

Probably the toughest situation to figure out for me was level three in Fagranc. After getting two ornate keys, the player must pass through that room with several teleporting floor tiles, entering the west door and exiting the east. I don't have the space to detail the entire solution, but I was able to do it with only the four party members. The player who is stumped by this section should remember two things: the stake barrier can't be raised if a character is standing on it, and party members can only teleport across it when it is down.

Another tactic useful when it seems there aren't enough characters to cover all the bases is to 'pre-program' commands into them. Party members can be told to push a lever that is blocked by another character, and as soon as they moves the command will be completed. Sometimes, several attempts are needed to get past an obstacle, especially if monsters wander in and disrupt the player's plan. If he is lucky, he may be able to turn this to his advantage by freezing an enemy on a tile he needs to cover. One puzzle I was only able to solve by having all four characters run towards the lever at once. I'm not sure exactly what happened, but one got through to reach the goal.

Several of the puzzles involve sliding a single floor tile around in order to make a path. The best example of this is found on level three of the Dark Tower. The four runes on the floor turn the tower, turn the directional arrow, and slide the tile in the direction of the arrow. Hitting the heal and damage runes cause the fireballs to be launched, turning the arrow. Hit the 'paralyze rune' to turn the tower and activate the dispell tile to slide the floor piece in the southeast corner of the room.

The first rune the Runemaster should buy is probably the 'Forward' vector rune, a 'Forward-Damage' spell is much easier to use in the fast-paced melee than a 'Missile-Damage'.

Another good spell is 'Forward-Missile-Damage', allowing the Runemaster to hit an enemy through another character. This rune will also be needed on level one of the Dark Tower. To hit the heal rune on the floor that is blocked by a table, use 'Missile-Forward-Heal', or 'Missile-Surround-Heal' aimed just west of the target.

Until the player can afford the Regeneration and Vivify runes, casting 'Continuous-Heal' on the dungeon floor can be a lifesaver. While it may help the enemy, it will also boost the party members as they run through it. It's easier to create this stationary pool of healing than to try and hit individual characters with a 'Missile-Heal' spell.

To defeat Tetrahagael in the lowest level of the UnShrine, mystic weapons are a must. Unfortunately, every time he hits with a spell it usually dispels the magic cast on the party. The tactic that finally did him in was to get him to attack my heavily armored Berserker while the Assassin used a backstab from the rear. No one but the Assassin seemed to even be able to make a decent hit on him, and magic spells had no effect.

Before entering the King's Castle, be certain to have the maximum spells mixed and all the reagents that can be carried. Once inside this final dungeon, there is no way back out.

The party finds the very best arms and armor in the game here, as well as good amounts of reagents. Even so, the Runemaster should use them as sparingly as possible, or he'll soon be helpless to fight the King himself. In the final fight, the player will be lucky if even the Runemaster remains standing in the end. It took me two and a half hours of trying to finish it, and then the ending didn't seem worth it.

While the combat in this game became tedious and the simple 'find a key to open a door' quests got to be a chore, the spell system and puzzles kept my interest. If players finds themselves stumped, look around for levers to pull or floor tiles marked with runes.

After pulling a lever or casting a spell, look for any

change in the room or in the automap displayed by Elliot the dragon. Some levers change the situation in a room elsewhere in the dungeon, or change the function of another lever.

When the player is ready to enter the Castle, try to buy scrolls with 'Missile-Vivify'. The Runemaster will likely be killed more than once, and without his spells combat is difficult and the puzzles probably can't be finished. Having a high Luck will save a character from the full damage of a spell that would have killed him, when it drops to zero he will have no saves left and may be accidentally killed by a friendly spell.

Save often in the Castle, and consider starting over from outside if anyone's luck runs out, especially the Runemaster's.

Gregg Ellsworth

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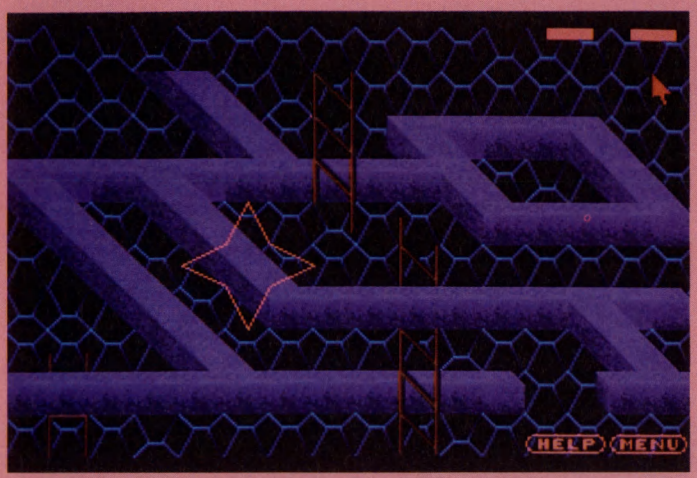

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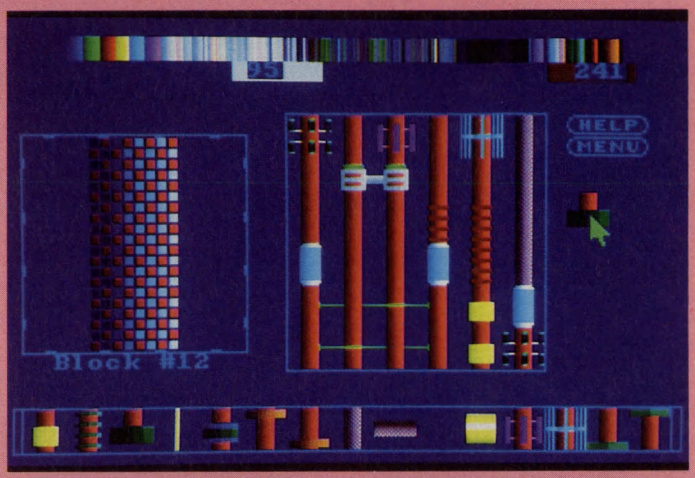

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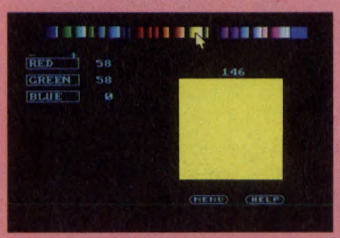

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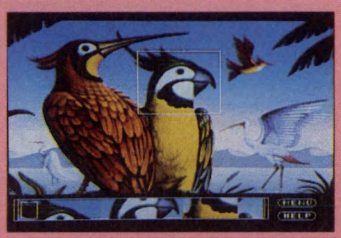

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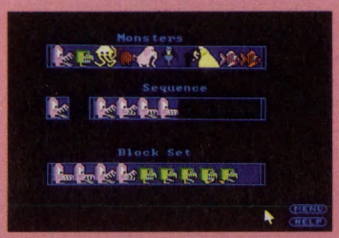
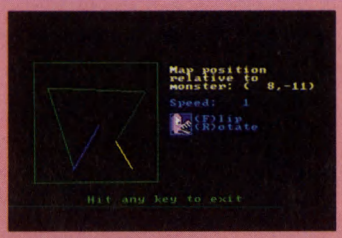


Animate Monsters



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Prophecy of the Shadow

Something new and different from SSI, ***Prophecy of the Shadow*** *is a single-character role playing adventure game. The interface is a responsive and detailed overhead view that makes full use of a mouse. Keyboard input is also supported. Action, conversation and spellcasting are menu driven and specific actions such as talk, look, use and sleep are activated by icons. Combat is realtime and very basic. The character must be holding a weapon to be effective. Fortunately, the enemy can be seen before an attack which allows time to arm the unready adventurer. Spellcasting requires the character to be holding one of several catalysts available, and to have the spellbook in inventory.*

Prophecy of the Shadow *is not exactly like any game, but it plays enough like a Sierra game with a Legend menu to be comfortably familiar to an adventure gamer, and enough like the* ***Ultimas*** *to appeal to diehard role players.*

Prophecy of the Shadow*, affectionately known as* ***'POTS'****, has a good solid story which is exposed in a cleverly linear series of discoveries and NPC interactions. Skills improve with use and character advancement is reasonably paced. Inventory is severely limited and currency is scarce. Once the Sack of Holding is located, inventory becomes less of a concern but lack of silver pieces can haunt the gamer. One nice touch is that money can be earned by working for the various innkeepers. Unfortunately they run out of work when the cash stash reaches 110, hardly enough to support a hungry adventurer.*

Playing time for ***POTS*** *is around 60 hours which makes it an excellent choice as a diversion between megagames. Copious notes are not required because each successful NPC interaction adds vocabulary to the conversation menu. Mapping is nearly impossible since one step of mouse or keyboard motion results in the character moving several paces, and motion is on a 360 degree scroll. A very small section of the gameworld is onscreen and getting lost is all too easy. Even with the available Crystal Orb views, automapping would have raised this game from neat to WoW! But help is at hand in the shape of the following block buster.*

Prophecy of the Shadow

Designed by
Jaimi R R McEntire

Published by
SSI
US Gold (UK)

Systems
PC Amiga

Supports
Sound Blaster, SB Pro (music and sound effects); AdLib, Roland and compatibles (music only)

Tips

Generate your character for max health. Always rest after combat. Cast a remember spell near an inn, this allows a weary adventurer to pop there at any time to rest back to full powers. Cache extra goodies nearby. In the early going, remember Larkin's house which is a free rest stop.

Hit and run is an effective combat strategy, especially when battling the first Mage Killer encountered. Cast self cures like a madman and don't be afraid to use the healing potions during battle. Wield the baddest weapon available which is *not* one of the catalysts. The catalysts are 2 damage point weapons. There is a long sword for sale in one of the pawn shops. Buy it.

Make Berrin's house the first stop in this game after Larkin's funeral. Berrin is located to the west of Larkin's house and can be found by taking the costal trail. Robin is fond of White Zinfandel which is available in the Tavern. Wait until after Robin has been thoroughly questioned before slaking his thirst.

Larf's Rod is the key to successful travel arrangements, but the road will be rocky. Pointedly so.

Gazer Ichor will increase magic ability, but the user must be in good physical shape first. Ichor is a shock to the system! The Sack of Holding is hidden in the sewers under Granite. The Common/Gazer dictionary from the library is needed to read gazer and to speak to Bardach. To learn the resurrect spell, provide the witch with a Black Potion, the Torlok Tongue, a Pango Fruit, Larf's severed head, and some spider venom. The Gold catalyst is required to cast respirare.

The Shadow Sword can be found in the Silver Mines and the Gold Catalyst is hidden in the Temple of Malice. The secret to cracking Abraxus Tomb lies in the proper placement of four seals. Clockwise from ten o'clock they are Earthen Wand, Fan of Shadows, Everfill Flask, and Eternal Lamp. Once Abraxus is resurrected, quick use of the Shadow Sword is the only salvation.

Jaimi McEntire, designer, author, programmer and defacto **POTS** expert has shared the following with us:'We had a lot of fun putting this game together. Some of my favorite parts: Putting the AntiMagic (shadow) sword into the Magical Pack of Holding. Naming the People in the castle as parodies of 'other' games. Putting in silly responses (ie use the Crystal Orb underground). Writing the Death Spell ('Necare').

'The most important clues I can give are the standard ones - read everything, search everywhere, and talk to everyone. Unlike some other games, it is not necessary to remember every detail of information, rather it builds a background for the character to figure out what's what.

'Fun things to do with TimeStop - or how to kill an Evil Usurper with just a sling: When time is stopped, everything outside the character's personal space is also stopped. This makes it possible to target and throw multitudes of rocks (or arrows, or fireballs) and have them queue up at a single target. When time continues, the target is hit by all queued missiles.

It is possible to get the gazers to kill themselves! This can be done two ways: Getting the gazer 'stuck' and then letting him fireball himself to death. (standing just right for this one is the challenge) or even easier, use the Shadow Sword (fire resistant) and just run up next to him! He will usually kill himself within 4 or 5 blasts!

'If combat experience is needed, but all the baddies have been killed, find the toughest one, cast resurrect and kill him again! This can be done over and over until health and agility are up to desired levels. It is more important to build up health and agility than it is magic. Use everything found when found except for the Time Stop scroll. Magic skill can be incremented by USEing the gazer ichor. ❑

Joan McKeown

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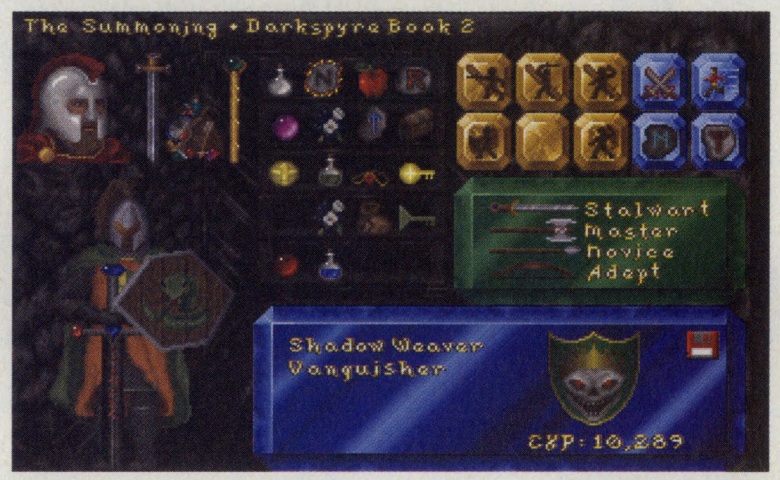
The Summoning

Dark Spyre Book II

By Joseph Boone



Designed by
Event Horizon

Published by
SSI

Systems
PC

Graphics
256 color VGA

Supports
Keyboard, mouse, most soundcards, printers.

Once again the forces of evil threaten to conquer all. Only a worthy champion descended from a hero of old can save the day. Navigate a seemingly endless labyrinth and kill the ultimate bad guy to make the world safe so we can all live happily ever after, or at least until the next sequel. Yawn. Anyone who plays of RPG's will find this to be a pretty familiar tale. **The Summoning** is obviously just another rehash of a genre that seems awfully tired at times. Or is it?

Seamless execution

The story of **The Summoning** is far from new but serves adequately to start the game in motion. Following the lengthy introduction, the hero is dumped into a rather sizable maze filled with monsters and traps. This is where the fun begins! **The Summoning** doesn't break much new ground in technology but it more than compensates for any lack of innovation with splendid execution.

The point-and-click interface is rapidly becoming the standard for computer gaming. While **The Summoning** supports keyboard users it functions most smoothly with a mouse firmly in hand. Indeed, there is a seamless quality to the interface that has rarely been equalled. At the core of this is the way the viewing screen operates. For example, the character's inventory and other information is accessed by expanding the size of the character information display while shrinking the viewing area of the surrounding environment. One has the flexibility to size these two portions as desired rather than being forced to flip back and forth between totally separate screens as most RPG's require. This is a small touch but it makes a difference.

Look no hands

In point of fact it is the accumulation of small touches that makes **The Summoning** worth playing. A utility allows the printing of all conversations with NPC's. Players are allowed to decide whether objects found in the dungeon should be rendered in scale or magnified. Objects at scale size can be difficult to see while the magnification option might be viewed as unrealistic or even a cheat by some. Allowing the player to choose is an excellent approach. There is also an auto-map feature that is well implemented. No one of these or the other features of the game is overwhelming but they combine to form an exciting and addictive game engine.

With all of my carrying on about the little things there are some readers who may be wondering if that means the more obvious facets of the game are of a similar quality. Rest assured that they are. The graphics are excellent and the sound effects are nearly as impressive as any that have yet passed through my SoundBlaster.

Combat is frequent and well balanced. The system even allows strategic decisions if desired, as it is possible to use fallen enemies or existing terrain to keep new foes at bay while shooting arrows, casting spells, or just thinking about what to do next. The puzzles are logical and not impossibly difficult. In fact, while I often had to struggle a bit to get through them I never once encountered a situation that I could not work through on my own.

Summing it up

No game is perfect and **The Summoning** is no exception. The magic system, for example, uses a novel approach but questionable approach. Spells are cast by using combinations of hand signals similar to sign language. Spells are found on scrolls which illustrate the proper hand movements for that spell. While this is interesting it is also a problem. There is no name for each hand sign and I cannot draw to save my life. This means that I have no way of recording each spell in my notes. As a result, I am forced to carry every scroll ever found to make sure that I don't forget any of the spells. Since there is a limit to the number of items as well as a maximum weight the character may carry, this is detrimental to managing resources efficiently in the game.

The Summoning is a game that benefits from a circumspect approach to its design. Great care was obviously taken to ensure that the total experience would be fun. All the chrome we look for is there as well, but it only enhances a solid game design rather than trying to take the place of one. There will be a number of games released this year that will undoubtedly receive more attention than **The Summoning** but few, of its type, will be any better. ❑

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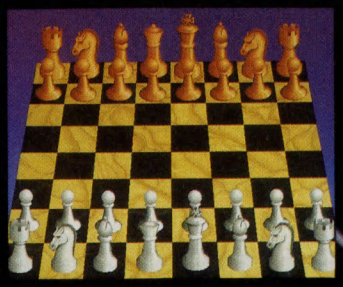

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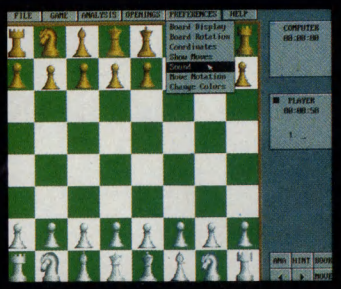

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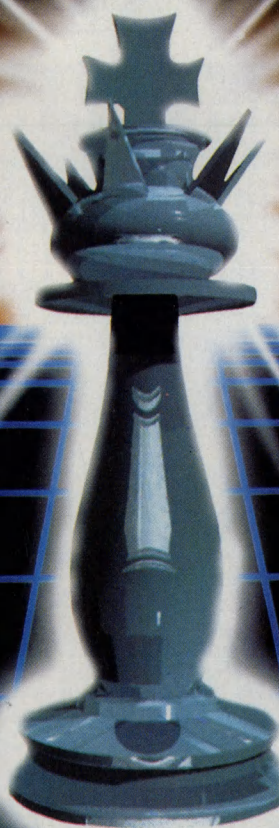

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The Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes

The Case of the Serrated Scalpel

By Theo Clarke

On a London night in November 1888 the rain falls softly as a hansom cab drives down Whitehall Stowards the tower of the Houses of Parliament. In the alley behind the Regency Theatre a tall cloaked man in an opera hat smokes cigarettes as he hides behind a crate. A lady in red walks down the steps from the stage door. Light glints on the serrated edge of a scalpel as the man pounces on his victim. She falls. As he crouches over the corpse another woman leaves the theatre. Seeing the villain she screams and he flees.

A ripping yarn

Early next morning in Baker Street Sherlock Holmes is breakfasting with John Watson MD. A policeman calls with a note from Inspector Lestrade. Scotland Yard would appreciate the assistance of the great consulting detective. Holmes responds to the call and finds that Lestrade is inclined to blame the notorious Jack the Ripper. Holmes thinks otherwise.

This is the start of the largest adventure game that there has ever been. The fully decompressed files fill 28MB of hard disk. The game then uses every cranny in the machine memory. It makes **Ultima VII** look like **Lunar Lander** for resource requirements.

The animated graphics and the sound combine to form an atmospheric interpretation of Victorian London that

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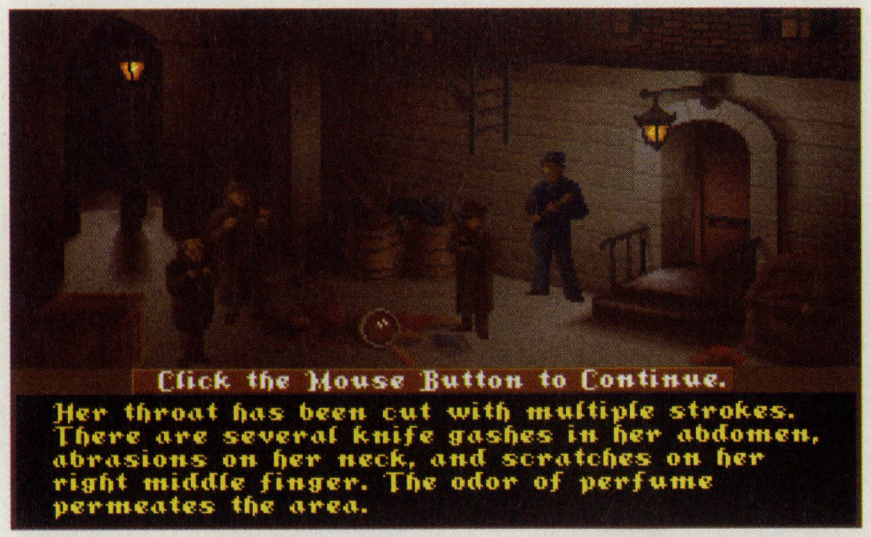
merits the massive system demands. Holmes and Watson move through a three-dimensional world. The quality of the art is high and the animation is sophisticated. There is some compromise in the pixelation of the large scenes such as the views of entire rooms, but the animation of details like Holmes' laboratory bench are rendered in high resolution.

High tech

The technical aspects of the game are of a high standard and the user interface is particularly pleasing. An intelligently active cursor assumes the most obvious default interaction for each item on screen. There is a large menu of commands displayed at the foot of the screen all the time although the contents of this menu are not constant. If Holmes decides to use an object from his pockets an iconic menu appears, depicting each of the available item. This can lead to strange instructions like 'use flower on laboratory bench' but the sense is obvious.

Similarly, when Holmes chooses to talk to someone, a list of possible conversational gambits is displayed in the menu space. The other party replies and the next set of responses is displayed. In this way the characters hold credible conversations. It is perhaps inevitable that the voices display the subtle ear for London accents as that shown by American actors ever since Dick Van Dyke portrayed a cockney in *Mary Poppins*. Despite this, atmosphere pervades the game.


Click the Mouse Button to Continue.
Her throat has been cut with multiple strokes. There are several knife gashes in her abdomen, abrasions on her neck, and scratches on her right middle finger. The odor of perfume permeates the area.

Bulls eye

Holmes addresses Watson in the magnificently condescending manner that aficionados have come to admire. The muted colours reinforce the imagery. When Holmes and Watson find themselves in a disreputable pub in Covent Garden there is a darts simulation that would do credit to a specialist collection. Certainly, none of the items in the old **Bar Games** collection can match this

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incidental feature of **The Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes** for atmosphere and accuracy.

The structure of the game owes an obvious debt to the room-based structure of the earliest adventure games. A clever linking device is the decorated map of central London with the key locations highlighted by icons as they become known. Leaving any 'room' by the exit reveals the map. Pointing at any location icon and clicking there causes an animated hansom cab to transport Holmes from the last location to the new one. Some of the locations consist of multiple rooms but most are singular. Baker Street includes the street and the parlour as its two locations but the Mortuary is a single room.

Do the strand

Another neat touch is the technique for logging a player's activities. Throughout the game Watson can be seen scribbling in a notebook whenever he is not moving. He is writing the journals upon which the famous stories in *The Strand Magazine* are based. A player can read these journals directly or print them off for later study. Watson's prose style is somewhat stilted but we must accept that these are just his working notes.

Watson's Journal is a useful aid in checking that all the known clues have been followed up, but they will not be needed by an experienced adventurer. The puzzles are linear and can be readily resolved by the application of logical analysis. It is not that the puzzles are simple. Rather, they are varied and entertaining but their internal logic is sufficiently consistent that new adventurers will be able to conclude the adventure with little or no external help.

The Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes is a satisfying challenge with sufficient period charm to satisfy Holmes enthusiasts and adventure gamers alike. Sadly, many of these players will need to make massive upgrades to their machines if they are to experience this delightful game.

Come, Watson, the game is afoot.. ❑

Designed by
R J Berg and Mythos Software

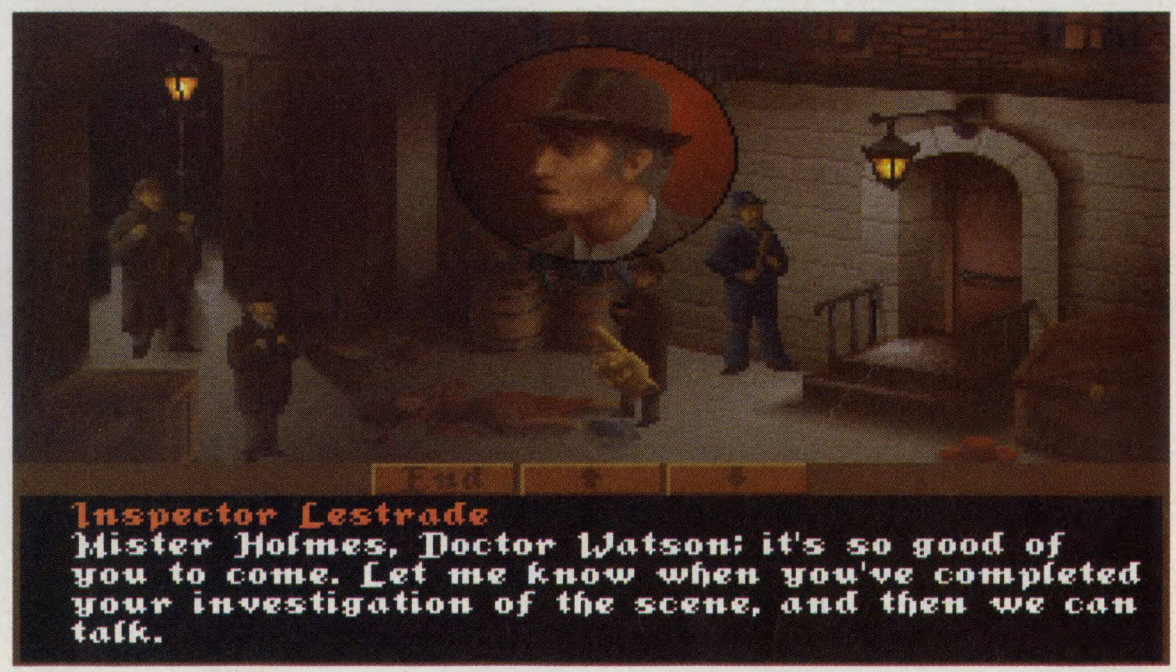
Published by
Electronic Arts

Systems
PC

Graphics
256 color VGA/MCGA

Supports
Music: Roland, AdLib, PS-1, Pro Audio Spectrum or Soundblaster
Speech: SoundBlaster Pro, Pro Audio Spectrum, Thunder Board and Disney Sound Source
Mouse, joystick or keyboard

Notes
This is the first case in an intended series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Dungeon Master

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FTL's **Dungeon Master** has been released for the PC and MaMa sez... What a snug and comfy dungeon for Mama to return to after all these years. Yes, years. The first version of **Dungeon Master** appeared for play in 1988, for the Apple GS and the Amiga, with a first copyright date of 1987. The phrase 'nice but you should have seen **DM**' has appeared in discussions about nearly every RPG published since then. Like a guy's first lay, the memories were replaced by the tellings, and legends grew.

Stolen thunder

Eye of the Beholder was hailed as 'the **Dungeon Master**' of PC compatible games'. **Eye of the Beholder II** became 'even more like **Dungeon Master**'. **Ultima Underworld** has been touted as 'even better than **Dungeon Master**'. The conventional wisdom held that when FTL finally got around to issuing **Dungeon Master** for the PC, we would all be disappointed. The thunder has been stolen by SSI and Origin. **Dungeon Master PC** would be viewed as just a pale rip off of the wonders found in the **Underworld** and in **EOB II: The Legend of Dark Moon**.

MaMa sez...all of these games are terrific. They each represent refinements on a theme, but the theme that was set by **Dungeon Master** is as driving and solid now as it seemed in 1988. MaMa's read on this one is that each of these dungeon games are reflections of **Dungeon Master**; enhancements, variations rather than flat out imitations, and evidence of homage to a true original.

Monster mash

Dungeon Master has the perfect story for a dungeon crawl...none whatsoever. Oh, there is the customary adventurer's tale in the manual, but no prose or characters or mysteries in the game itself. Gameplay consists of self-aggrandizement by the player characters, key hunts, and monster mashing of the highest order. Mapping skills and a keen eye are the major puzzle solving requirements - find a button, push it and go look for what it moved. And look out for the roving monsters on the way!

The only battle in any of the newer dungeon games that even comes close to the original iteration in difficulty and satisfaction is the dual incarnation of Dran in **Eye of the Beholder II**. That peculiar dance, the Beholder Two-Step, that so permeates both **Eye I** and **Eye II**, is the same as the Box Step required to defeat Chaos in **DM**. Weapons vary, and timing is slightly different, but the beating is the same.

The Beholder...eye open and fireball away is a **DM** beast that has migrated to just about every other RPG around! The **DM** beholder is a lot easier to deal with than most since it will succumb to fireball spells as well as

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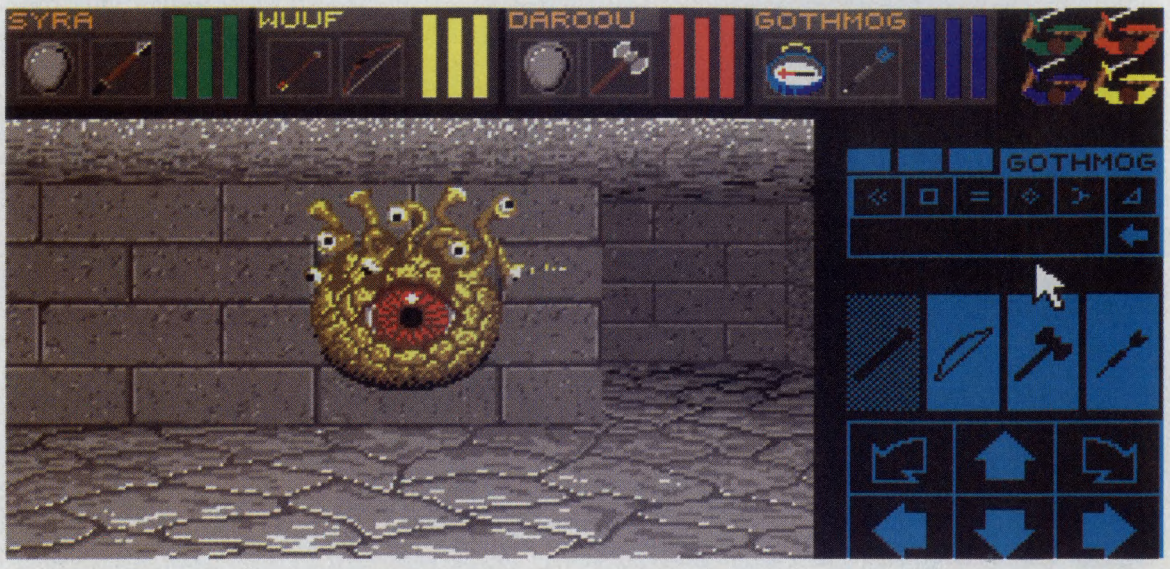

weapons. Check out the fountains in **DM** then go drink in **Bane of the Cosmic Forge**. Check out the combat options and weapons in **DM** and then re-run an **EOB** party. The next time a white worm crawls out of the stone work in **Bane**, shiver a little in respect for the purple horrors of **DM**. The formula: pressure plate + stone = open grate/door/wall is a primer for most dungeons. In **DM**, the requisite weight is variable, reflected well in **Dark Spyre**'s plates. Then there is the ritual item in a niche routine. They all use this one!

Dining out

Dungeon Master implemented most of the things that RPG players wished for, subsequent games have refined and built upon that original wish fulfillment. The most amazing thing about **DM** at the time it was first released was the first person perspective with fully manipulated objects. The most amazing thing about **DM** now is that it is still a cracking good game, and just as spectacular as it appeared to be five years ago.

Dining in the **DM** dungeon is an advanced art, and a dying one if the party isn't careful. There is a finders-keepers menu that consists of fruit, corn, drumsticks, bread, and cheese. Hunters can partake of the Steaks R Us Menu: Screamer Slices, Worm Chunks and Dragon Steaks. The most stomach churning moment in the game arrives when the party discovers the source of those luscious drumsticks.

The most cowardly fun in **Dungeon Master** occurs if the player shoots a poor prisoner from across a pit and then proceeds to fireball hordes of purple worms from a safe but flashy distance.

The moments with the highest jump from the chair index occur when the party rounds a corner and bumps into a couple of food dwarves. The other monsters can be heard before they are seen. Even the Killer Puddles from Inner Space have a warning slosh. But those dwarves are sneaky...and mean.

The most hated dungeon dwellers are the swift and agile giggle-grabbers. They are particularly adept at item theft, and in the PC version of **DM**, they can grab stuff from either hand of any character. Fortunately, individuals can be followed and kicked to death in a corner, whereupon stolen items can be recovered along with some self respect. The trick is to follow the right little thief!

To be or...

Aside from the battles with Chaos and some of the Stone Golem on the FireStaff level, the most terrifying encounters are coming face to stinger with ten foot high scorpions, or being on the munchie end of a purple worm hole.

The sound effects for these particular monsters are enough to freeze a mouser in mid-click. Flying Snakes, Killer Bees, Walking Skeletons, Animated Armor, Ethereal Plants, Green Meanies, Mummies, fireballs, traps, pits, teleports, and the occasional clutch of Beholders combine to make **Dungeon Master** a very hard act to follow and an easy one from which to glean inspiration.

To say that any of the games mentioned here are copies of **Dungeon Master** would be akin to saying that a David Mamet play is a rip-off of Shakespeare. Both captured their own contemporary dialogue and rhythm in a popular format. MaMa sez...style is the keynote of these games, and **Dungeon Master** an inspiration for much of the style.

DM is one legend that is not dimmed by the telling. Guys, rejoice! ❑

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CD ROM

Loom

Designed by
Brian Moriarty

Published by
The Software Toolworks

Systems
PC CD ROM

Sound
CD Audio

The Secret of Monkey Island

Designed by
Ron Gilbert

Published by
The Software Toolworks

Systems
PC CD ROM

Sound
CD Audio, SoundBlaster, Roland

Theo Clarke and Richard Lawrence undergo conversions

The only computer adventure game that I have played more than three times is **Loom**. When the game first appeared in 1990 I was entranced and, although it takes less than a day to solve and less than three hours to replay, I rate it among the best computer games. At the end of the first game it was implied that a sequel would be appearing. Two years have passed without such a sequel but this new CD ROM conversion has rekindled my interest.

On a fantasy world where the guilds of craftsmen each form complete discrete communities, the weavers have learnt to manipulate the fabric of space-time. Their use of magic aroused fear and a period of persecution so the weavers withdrew from the world of men to a remote island which they named Loom. The weavers are sterile but Bobbin Threadbare was born of magic and brought up by an old woman who has begun to teach him some of the Guild's secrets, despite the strictures of the Elders.

Loom is the story of Bobbin's search for his lost Guild and his consequent involvement in the war against the chaos that is spreading across The Pattern. And, as the tale unfolds, our hero learns new spells and increases the range of notes that he can use.

The user interface is entirely pointer-driven and the animation is smooth. Bobbin's grows or diminishes to maintain consistency with the perspective of his surroundings as he moves. Clicking on some items yields the notes of a spell. There is a strong melodic element to the game but no musical aptitude is needed to play.

Clearly this game was crying out for a CD audio version. The original version had a powerful, evocative score when played through an AdLib or a Roland card but the CD sound is awesome. All the textual speech has been replaced by well-characterised digital audio. This small change makes a huge difference to the player's involvement in the game. The other major change is visual: the graphics have been upgraded from 16 color VGA to 256 color and the results are stunning. I did not intend to play the game right through when the new version arrived. I just booted it up to see the extent of the changes, and subsequently lost half a day in The Pattern.

The Secret of Monkey Island

Shortly after **Loom** was first published, **The Secret of Monkey Island** made an appearance. At the time it was widely hailed as the game of the year and it remains an excellent adventure despite subsequent competition. The game is witty, the graphics are splendid (if grainy), and the sound and music enhance the game. The new CD-ROM version does not change this position. This is because the new version is not significantly changed from the original.

The use of CD Audio for the music has marginally increased the sound quality but the sound effects are still digitised sounds from a low-frequency sound card, and the speech remains text-based. The only benefits to be gained from the CD-ROM version are that the storage medium is smaller and more flexible and that one copy contains mul-

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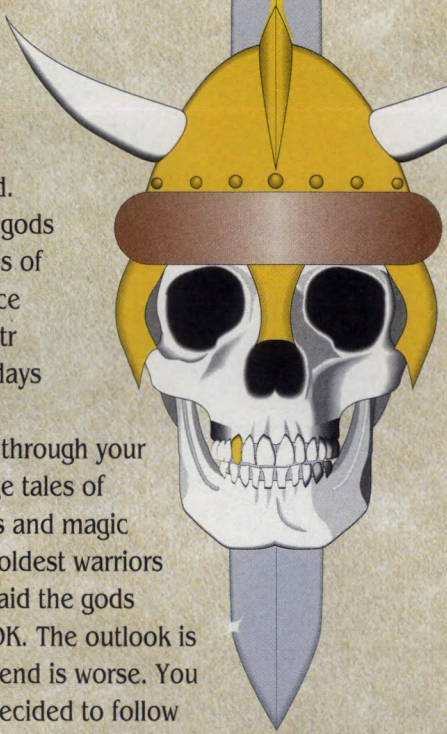

The year is 999 A.D. The time of great dread has come. Long have the Viking prophets foretold of RAGNAROK, the final battle of the gods, which will determine the fate of the world. From before the ancient times, the great gods of your people - Odin, Thor and the forces of Asgard - have championed the human race and have withstood the power of evil Surtr and his hoards of fire demons. Now the days have become dark and cold.

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tiple languages. Wealthy polyglots with limited storage space may care to replace their magnetic version with this new one. For those who do not already own the game and have money to burn then this version could be what they are looking for. But for the hoi polloi my recommendation is: buy the original and get more game for your greenbacks.

Theo Clarke

Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe

There's probably one question that is on just about every readers mind for this review, so it will be laid to rest early: there is nothing really special about the CD-ROM version of **Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe** ('**SWOTL**'). Those expecting whiz bang graphic improvements or ultra detailed maps due to the huge storage capacity of CDs can stop reading now. The rest of this review details peculiarities of the CD-ROM version and characteristics of the add-on planes, and assumes a basic familiarity with the DOS version of **SWOTL**.

SWOTL on CD ROM in addition to the master program, contains four Tour of Duty extensions (new aircraft), and two small manuals. The packaging was rather surprising - LucasArts has been praised in the past for their beefy, historically accurate manuals that help to immerse the gamer in the experience, but in this unimposing shrink wrapped bundle is only a small (90 page) overview manual and a reference guide. What happened to that big textbook style manual? The answer is that it is on the CD.

The Software Toolworks who publish the CD version obviously thought this out, as the small printed manual and reference guide supplied contain just about everything that the player might need during a game session (ie charts for key commands). The CD contains most of the background information that, while interesting, isn't necessary for actual play.

The only problem with this arrangement is the discussion of combat tactics, which is on the CD and not in the manuals. The viewer supplied on the CD shows text only, using colors for bold and italics. If one were new to the flight simulation genre, it would be difficult to understand maneuvers described such as the Immelman without a diagram. With all the free space on the CD (595 megabytes!) it seems that Software Toolworks could have worked some type of viewer that showed the manual graphically, or at least had special slides of the maneuvers described.

Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe

Designed by
Lawrence Holland

Published by
The Software Toolworks

Systems
PC CD ROM

Sound
AdLib Soundblaster

This is a small point, but there were some other annoyances that added up during the installation of the game. The install program rather intelligently asks the player how much of the program they wish to put on their hard disk, anywhere from 1/4 MB to 3.5MB, with the rest being on the CD. A floppy can be used as storage, but isn't recommended. The 3.5 MB install is listed as a 'full installation' but still requires the presence of the CD to run. This seems unnecessary, since all the programs have been copied over, but may be some small attempt at copy protection. Experiments at fooling the program into thinking a hard disk was the CD were unsuccessful. The install program demands that it use its own directory structure, and doesn't allow the user to determine where the files are placed. Further, each and every time the program is run (or when the player switches between manual on disk/game) the install program searches each drive in the system for the **SWOTL** directory, starting with the floppies! It's annoying to have floppies making impolite noises just because **SWOTL**'s install program isn't very smart.

The last rough edge is that many of the functions in the text browser for the on-line manual do not seem to be implemented yet, since they do nothing. It almost looks like this product was rushed.

Once past these idiosyncrasies, however, it's easy for the player to forget them and get involved in the game. The CD-ROM drive used in the test system for this review (Hitachi 3700) did surprisingly well at load times, considering its relative speed to a true hard drive. Loading a

typical mission took 6-7 seconds on average, and switching between the mission map and the cockpit view took about 5 seconds either way. Not unbearable, but slower than many DOS players will be used to.

The new planes are the Dornier 335 Pfeil, the P-38 Lightning, and two jets: the He 162 and P-80. All feature detailed cockpits and distinct flight characteristics (the Dornier, with both a front and rear engine, behaves quite strangely at first).

Speed during actual play is not a problem, and those who have forgotten will be pleasantly surprised by **SWOTL** CD's brisk refresh rate, considerably faster than many newer releases. All of the features that make floppy **SWOTL** appealing! (campaigns, playing both sides, decent flight model, good graphics) are preserved but not enhanced in this version. For those that already have **SWOTL**, there's no pressing need to buy the CD ROM version, but users who haven't experienced it yet and have the equipment are encouraged to pick it up. ❑

Richard Lawrence

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THE SPORTS LOCKER

Joseph McCullough assesses baseball's finest

Over the past year, game publishers have taken baseball fan by storm, pitching a seemingly endless stream of hyped-up baseball simulations. Each promises more features, bigger names, better graphics, more excitement, and (my favorite catch-phrase) 'unparalleled baseball realism.' Whether love for the game or the greenback was the motive is hard to say (it's probably the latter). Whatever the case, the buying public can now choose a baseball game that suits every need or desire. Finding the right one, however, can be a bit tricky. Sure, there's always the option of buying them all but only the highest paid baseball players could justify that expense.

This column intends to take the mystery out of finding the right game by summarizing the current line-up of contenders.

Where the action is

Players who don't want to be bothered by a perplexing plethora of management decisions can opt to go the action-only route. In this case, only one game stands out as appealing solely to

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*Actual Links 386 Pro Super VGA Screens

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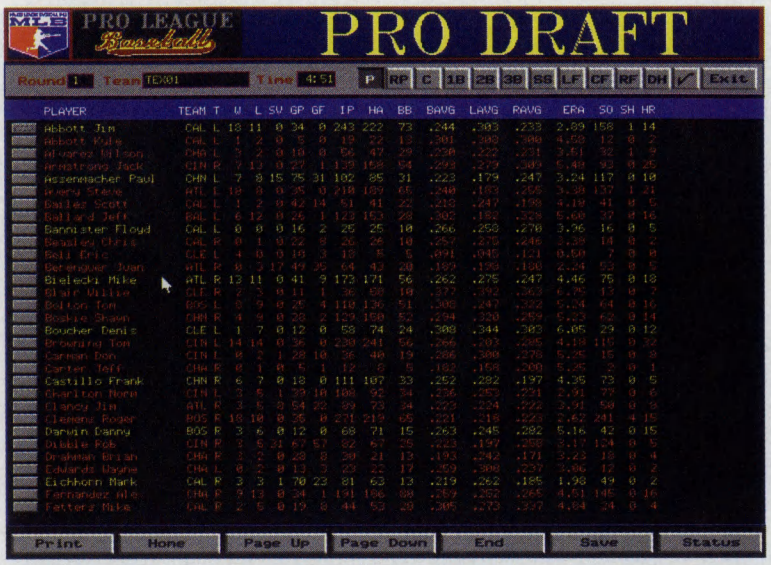
the arcade crowd - **Bo Jackson Baseball**. This game relies exclusively on player reflexes to determine game outcomes. All running, hitting, and throwing are player-controlled. As for stats, they are tracked but don't affect the game. Instead, on-screen players perform according to a series of skill ratings. The graphics are fluid, and the interface is utilitarian - a perfect combination for any arcade game.

A thinking man's game

At the other end of the spectrum are the manage-only games. These are judged by how well they simulate the game of baseball, and by how well the player feels he controls game outcomes. Nice graphics and sound are a plus, but they are not the main concern of this breed.

There are three new games in this niche: **Micro League Baseball 4.0**, **Pursue the Pennant 4.0**, and **Pro League Baseball**. Interestingly, each is sufficiently different from the others to warrant significant comment.



Micro League Baseball perhaps gives the player the greatest feeling of control over game outcomes. Players can shift the defense, adjust pitching and batting strategies, and create playbooks including up to 99 custom plays. The graphics are also the best among the three in its class. To surpass the others, though, it needs much work on baseball realism. When playing, one frequently encounters games with ridiculously high scores (ie 20-18). That just doesn't happen in major league baseball.

If authenticity is the key, the other two games deliver. **Pursue the Pennant** has been a cult favorite for years. I say 'cult' favorite because one is not

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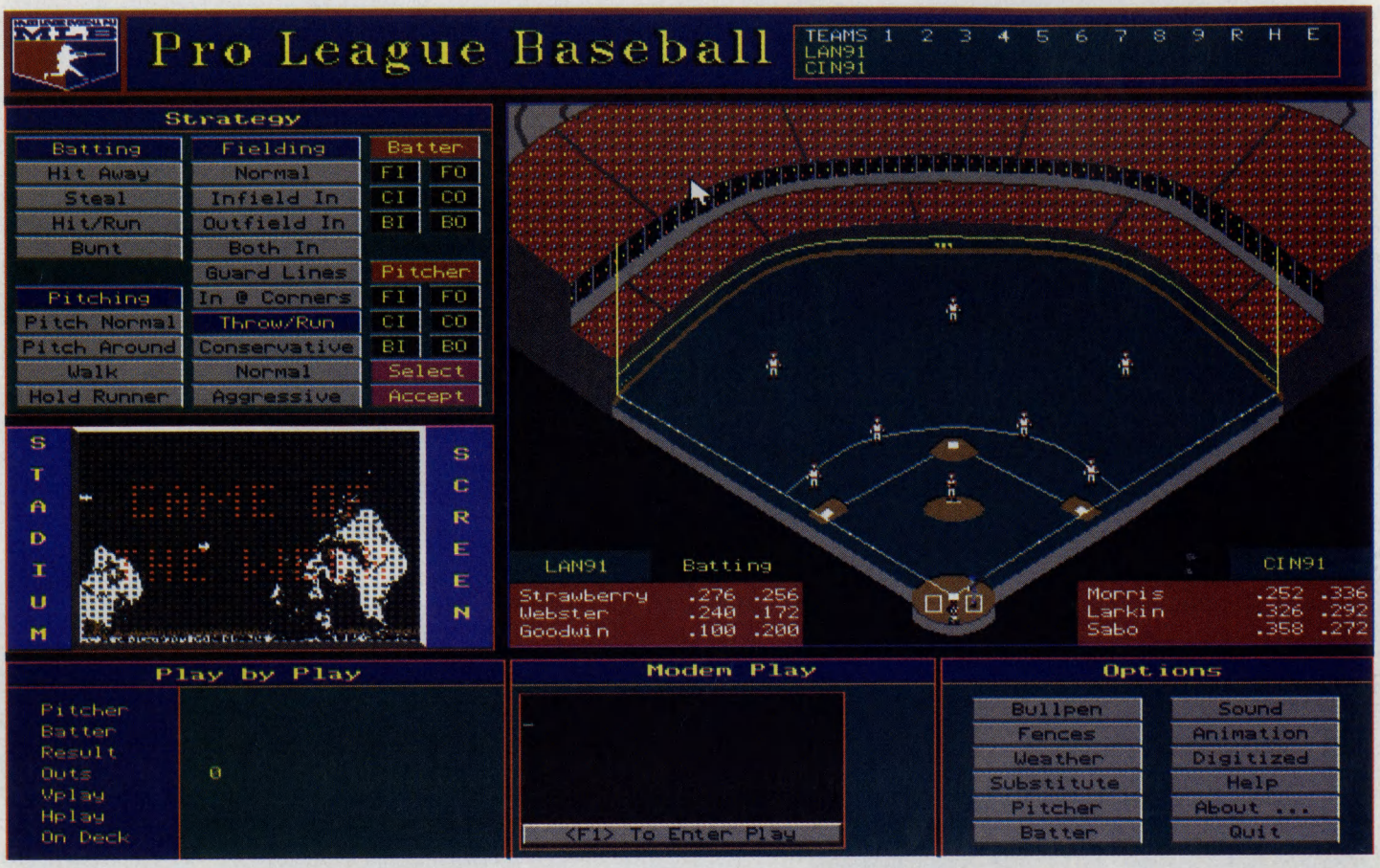

likely to find the game on the shelves of the local dealer.

Ordering direct is usually the best way to obtain the game. **PTP** offers fantastic league utilities, and a much better gaming engine than found in **Micro League Baseball**. The league and draft utilities are so complete that rotisserie leagues are forming on the major on-line networks.

Breaking new ground (as usual), Micro Sports' **Pro League Baseball** goes where no baseball game has gone before by offering true modem play. Betting that people will want to play people rather than try to out-smart a machine, Micro Sports has devoted nearly one quarter of the game's code to modem play. As a result, the game is not laden with as many management/ strategy choices as the other two. But one could argue that a complex set of strategic decisions would bog down a modem-play game. For more information about this unique game check the review in our next issue.

The remaining three releases try to combine the best of both action and strategy worlds in one game, with varying degrees of success. **Earl Weaver Baseball II** was the most widely awaited baseball simulation of the bunch. A follow-up to the classic original **Earl Weaver Baseball**, the sequel promised to be a sure hit. In its favor, the game supports every imaginable game play mode - from straight action to computer simulated seasons. It also boasts a credible game engine which produces believable results. The **Commissioner's Disk** is also a well thought-out set of add-on utilities. The graphics, animation, and game interface, though, are the worst of the lot. 'Nuff said.

If graphics and whiz-bang effects are a top priority, look no further than **Hardball III**. Stunning 256-colour VGA graphics and context-sensitive commentary by ABC announcer Al Michaels are the highlights of this dazzling game.

The stats aren't the greatest, nor are the management choices, but they pass muster. In fact, faced with such an entertaining combination of sight and sound, one almost forgets the game's shortcomings.

Tony LaRussa Ultimate Baseball rounds out the list of combination baseball simulations. Together with the **Fantasy Manager** add-on disk, it is a powerful and enjoyable baseball simulation. **'Ultimate Baseball'** can't quite compete with the flash of **Hardball III**, and it lacks one or two key features (extensive stat printing, for example), but it does the best job of integrating the two modes of play.

Ultimate Baseball is the only game on the market that can offer action mode, manage mode, and a hybrid of the two, all with crisp graphics and an intuitive interface.

Recommendations? The arcade crowd should take a look at **Bo Jackson Baseball** and **Hardball III**. These offer sufficient flash without mind-wracking sophistication. For stats lovers it's a toss up. Die hards will probably migrate toward **Pursue the Pennant** or **Pro League Baseball**. Both offer the best baseball realism, with the latter featuring modem play. For those who want a game that melds both worlds (and who are willing to make small compromises), **Ultimate Baseball** is the ticket. It doesn't do anything better than the best, but it does a lot of things better than most.❑

Next month: The Sports Locker rounds up golf games

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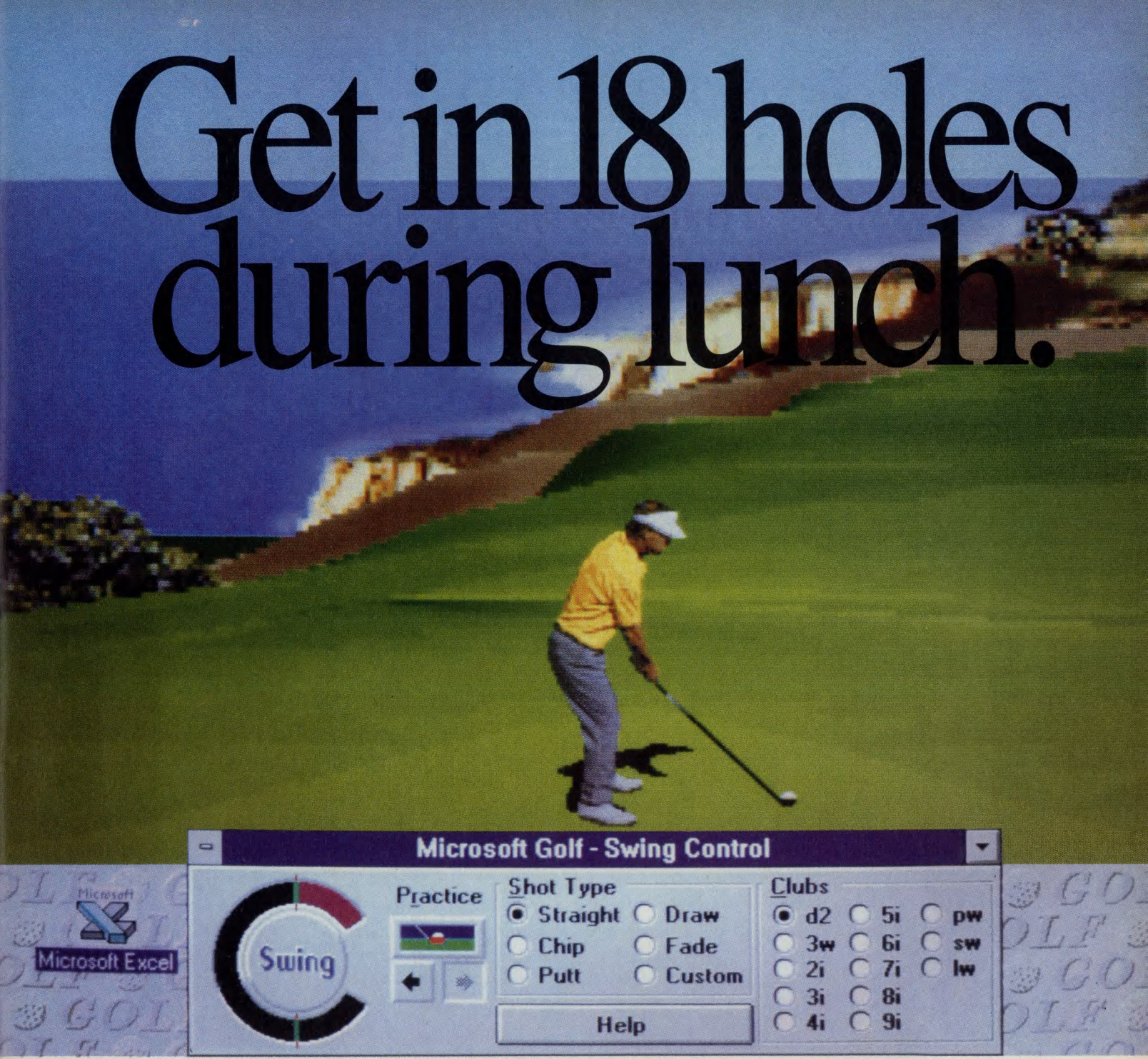

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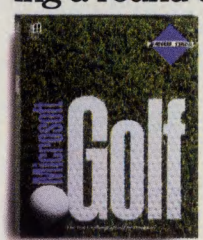

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COMMANDER CRUNCH REPORTS FROM THE HANGAR

I vaguely recall some promise awhile back about providing more in the way of tactics and tips for **Aces of the Pacific**. Well, it's been a bit of a haul since then, so let's start out with a generic and global tip. You wanna enjoy flight simulation? Read. Sounds simple, doesn't it? But in fact it's more of a basis for getting something out of the historically-based simulations than anything else.

Why is reading important? Well, at one level, all that flight simulation consists of is a bunch of images being moved around on-screen. Without any context, no flight simulation is much more than a glorified arcade shoot-'em-up game.

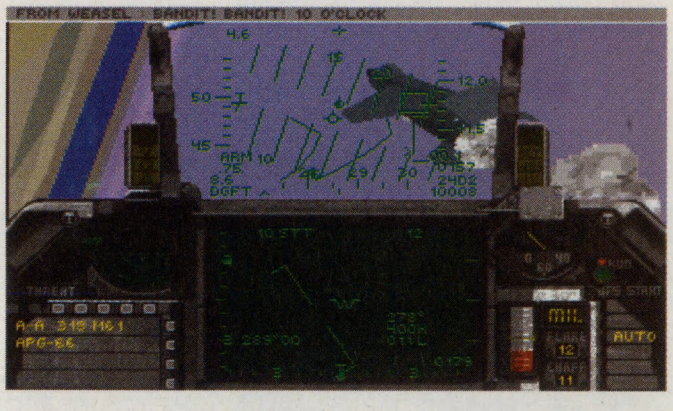
What gives flight simulations their meat is context. Furthermore, as much as companies like Spectrum Holobyte, Dynamix and Three-Sixty can pack into their software and manuals, it's not really ever going to be enough. Feeling like you're cruising along at 250 knots in a Mitsubishi Zero, for instance, requires some knowledge of the plane's history as well as its performance parameters. Beyond the equipment, knowing why flying a particular historical mission in a simulation is historically significant adds immeasurably to the sense of reality, depth and detail present at any moment of the simulated experience.

Perhaps this is why I enjoy the historical missions in **Aces of the Pacific** the best. With a little supplementary reading, it's easier to feel the imperatives motivating each side of the conflict, it's more exciting to imagine the perils and risks the actual combatants had to come to terms with, and it's more likely I'll feel placed somewhere out over the Pacific, circa 1944.

One of the remaining limitations in air combat simulation has nothing to do with the quality of the graphics or control technology; rather, it has to do with the experience of risk. The exhiliration that can come from flying a mission in **Falcon 3.0**, for instance, is due in no small part to all the work the player has to do beforehand in setting up a mission, configuring waypoints, flights, loadouts and targets. Flying a mission that is in some sense written by the player's choices in these matters involves risking the work already done in an imaginary setting where it may all come to naught.

Concomitantly, working with simulations that involve little more than clicking on a window to get into the cockpit prove quickly dissatisfying, simply because there's very little at stake in flying a particular mission.

If there's anything air combat simulation designers should continue to think through and innovate on, it's the question of how to give the player the experience of risk. The closing battles of any good computer role-playing game derive their excitement from risk; the player is staking the development of a party over many hours and days on the outcome of a final battle, and it matters when the members of the player's party matter.



Crunch goes Skywalking and meets a Flying Tiger. Read all about it

It's tricky, though; too much preparation beforehand can make setting up a particular mission a daunting prospect, particularly for those who've left the arena of complex wargaming either on board or on computer because of lack of time. The genius of **Falcon 3.0** is that, rather than requiring the player to do a certain extensive amount of preparation each time out, the design makes it possible to choose the amount of preparation and involvement desired. The same is true, in many ways, of **Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe**.

In designs like **Aces of the Pacific**, there's not much of that pre-flight preparation to engage in; one of the reasons why some might be passing over the meat of the game for the more immediate arcade-like satisfactions of a particular mission. That's why reading is all the more important in this case.

Well, enough pontificating, on to the fun. Mission Disk Mania continues to

Screenshots accompanying this article taken from Operation Fighting Tiger for Falcon 3.0

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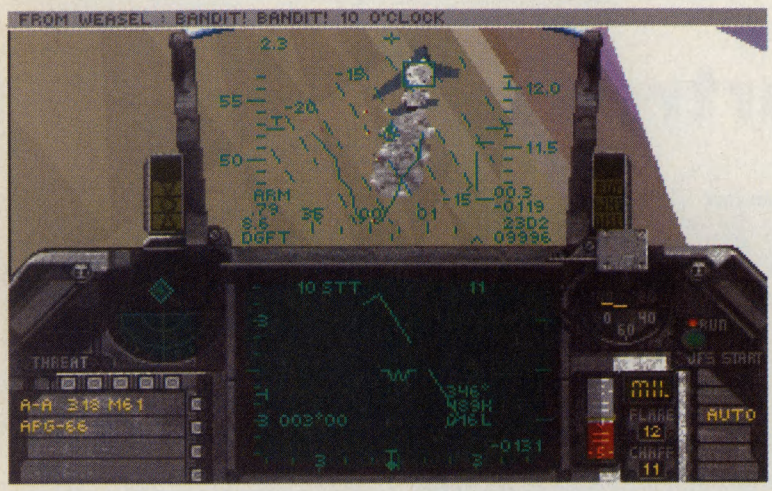


proliferate around the main air combat simulation designs: **Operation Fighting Tiger** for **Falcon 3.0**, the **DO-335 Pfeil Tour of Duty** for **SWOTL**, and **Megafortress Mission Disk Two: Operation Skymaster**. Upcoming are mission disks for **Aces of the Pacific** and **Gunship 2000** as well (hopefully by the time you're reading this).

Operation Fighting Tiger is the best of an excellent lot. Not only have Spectrum Holobyte chosen to include another solid update to **Falcon 3.0**, which fixes many remaining bugs and improves on a number of features (such as the ILS, wingman formation commands, runway approach lighting, and missile tracking, to name a few), but they've added advances made in the design of the three new theatres of operation (The Kurile Islands, Korea and Pakistan) back into the previous theatres included with the original software. This involves the improvements mentioned above, as well as changes in opponent tracking, targeting and flying AI that makes for even more precise and realistic air combat practice.

The new theatres are all gorgeous, and provide very different kinds of territorial and political imperatives. Perhaps the most innovative is the Kurile Islands theatre and related campaigns, as here the player's initial goal is to maintain explicit Rules of Engagement, which prohibit offensive first-fire at the start of a campaign. The limitations on engagement provide opportunities for doing things like spooking the opponent's plane as it attempts to invade the player's airspace, or make possible the excitement of suddenly finding oneself in the position of being on the razor's edge between maintaining RoE and defending against imminent attack. There's no way to know whether the opponent is also going to maintain RoE, so it can get pretty dicey out there.

Even more interestingly, should the player act before permission to engage is forthcoming from central air command, the computer AI reacts immediately to heighten the level of activity and hostility on the part of the computer-run planes and SAMs. Even accidentally firing off missiles which fail to hit their targets can prompt a distinct change in the flavor of the combat situation, intensifying the sense of realism during play all the more. Proof of the risk factor at work, most definitely.

Along with this addition of new kinds of theatre and campaign atmosphere, **Operation Fighting Tiger** provides a new version of the F-16, with SEA MODE radar, capable of sighting and targeting surface vessels for air-to sea combat. There's also a new flight command, SEAD (Suppress Enemy Air Defense), which extends the kinds of flight support for a mission the player can design to insure success of the primary flight.

Wingman commands have been added onto as well, with options now available to open up or close up formation, or to tell other planes to return to base. Both track and padlock views now display incoming missile tracking, guaranteed to produce sweaty palms in no time. All in all, a jolly good time for **Falcon 3.0** fans, and evidence the best may be yet to come.

Operation Skymaster, for **Megafortress**, also takes the Included Update path, and provides some minor fixes to the original software (greater compatibility with QEMM, among other things). More importantly, however, it offers twenty-one new missions split between two entirely different theatres, as well as Operation ROGAN, a special top-secret mission against North Korea's developing nuclear facilities. The latter includes some surprising twists in the story and sequence of events that takes place as the mission develops.

Operation Skymaster differs from the first two sets of missions primarily in the way many of the missions cascade objectives. Events in one of the theatres and Operation ROGAN are linked together narratively in the manual, thus filling out the context of the scenario all the more. Taken together with Operation Sledgehammer and the original Megafortress, though, this mission set helps fill out the design to the point where it serves as a truly comprehensive study of the combat operations and capabilities inherent to the **Megafotress** design. Again, reading of Dale Brown's novels as context for this simulation is highly recommended, not simply to provide clues for success, but to motivate gameplay.

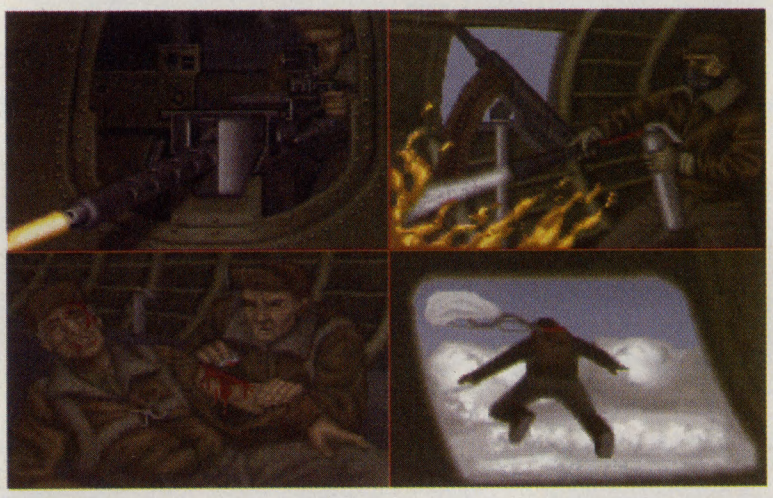
Finally, **Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe** has completed its run with the **Do-335 Pfeil** mission disk. This will be the last set of missions released for **SWOTL**, and a good thing, too, as my hard drive's all full now. But seriously, the **Do-335** set provides a Nazi equivalent in some ways to the P-38, and helps to turn an already massive air combat and strategy system into what could truly be called the first Air Combat Simulation Epic in software history. A definitive product, likely to be remembered as one of the high points in air combat simulation design.

It's truly astounding how far we've come in such a short time; I feel very lucky to be witnessing the appearance of this intricate new form of creativity and human imagination at its inception. May it live long and prosper *(amen - Ed)*. ❑

B-17 Flying Fortress

All hands on deck

By Paul Rigby



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Graphics
VGA

Supports
Roland, Adlib, Adlib Gold, Sound Blaster, mouse, keyboard and joystick.

We are now seeing the emergence of a new sub-genre of flight simulations. Following on from Three Sixty's **Megafortress**, the first effective simulation of a large aircraft, Microprose have released a game based upon the Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress. This heralds the establishment of what can be termed the 'flight management simulator'.

B-17 Flying Fortress not only requires the guiding of a B-17 over a 25-mission tour during World War II, dodging flak, German aircraft and the perils of malfunctioning equipment, but also demands management of the 10 crew members.

In a flap

Featuring a worthy manual of 230-pages **B-17** should be approached with respect. Moreso because this is the first flight management game to require hands-on control. **Megafortress** left flying to the computer. **B-17** not only retains this as an option but also *insists* on player participation during the landing portion of the mission. It appears that an automatic landing procedure was planned as it is mentioned in the manual. However, time must have got the better of the programmers as a 'readme' file states that landing must, after all, a be manual affair.

However, the premise behind the take off and landing (probably the most dangerous periods of a WW2 bomber's mission) will delight many. No pushing the throttles and jumping into the air here. To take off it is necessary to actually obtain clearance from the tower to proceed, start all four engines, increase the throttle to initiate forward movement to taxi after releasing the brake, and then wander slowly around the maze-like taxiway to the head of the runway (a map of the airfield really should have been included as it is easy to get lost). Then it's down with the flaps and pray to God that there's enough runway to get off the floor!

At the end of the mission, landing proves to be a difficult operation. This portion of the simulation needs careful preparation and many practice landings via the 'training' option before it can be completed with confidence. The trouble is that there isn't enough help in lining up for a landing approach, so recognising the surrounding topography is essential. If the airfield is reached and other flights are landing, then a rectangular racetrack cruise around the airfield has to be adopted until the go-ahead has been received. Altitude must be lost slowly in a lazy, gentle spiralling motion until the approach height is met. Finding the correct approach is not the end of it; the flaps must be lowered and the correct RPM and speed balanced. However, even when the aircraft hits the airfield the brakes cannot be hit until the speed drops off, which means losing a hell of a lot of runway. All good realistic stuff.

Art attack

But to begin at the beginning: selecting a B-17 is the first task. This option is enhanced via the selection of several pieces of nose art to decorate the nose area of the plane, plus a personalised nickname which will accompany it. Selecting the crew-members will bring up a crew photo. Injured crew will ominously disappear after a mission.

Selecting the training option offers an inland bombing run that is made easier by having no opposition and a nice juicy white cross on the target screaming 'Bomb Me!'. Players cannot pick and choose when it comes to missions, they must take what comes. Fortunately a reconnaissance film is provided for both primary and secondary targets. This is important as it appears to have been taken at a lower height offering greater details of the actual target. The player's bombing run is at a higher altitude so the reconnaissance film will be of help in memorizing the surrounding topography and essential landmarks.

A detailed strategic map can also be studied. This uses a scrolling option with the mouse pointer acting as an analogue controller. So the further away from the centre it is, the faster the map scrolls. It is a pity that both the primary and secondary waypoints are coloured very similarly (becoming confusing during those late-night gaming binges). Also, the key to the map is on the top left-hand corner. However, why should it be necessary to have to scroll up there every time it needs to be viewed? Why can't it be accessed it via a simple keypress or icon?

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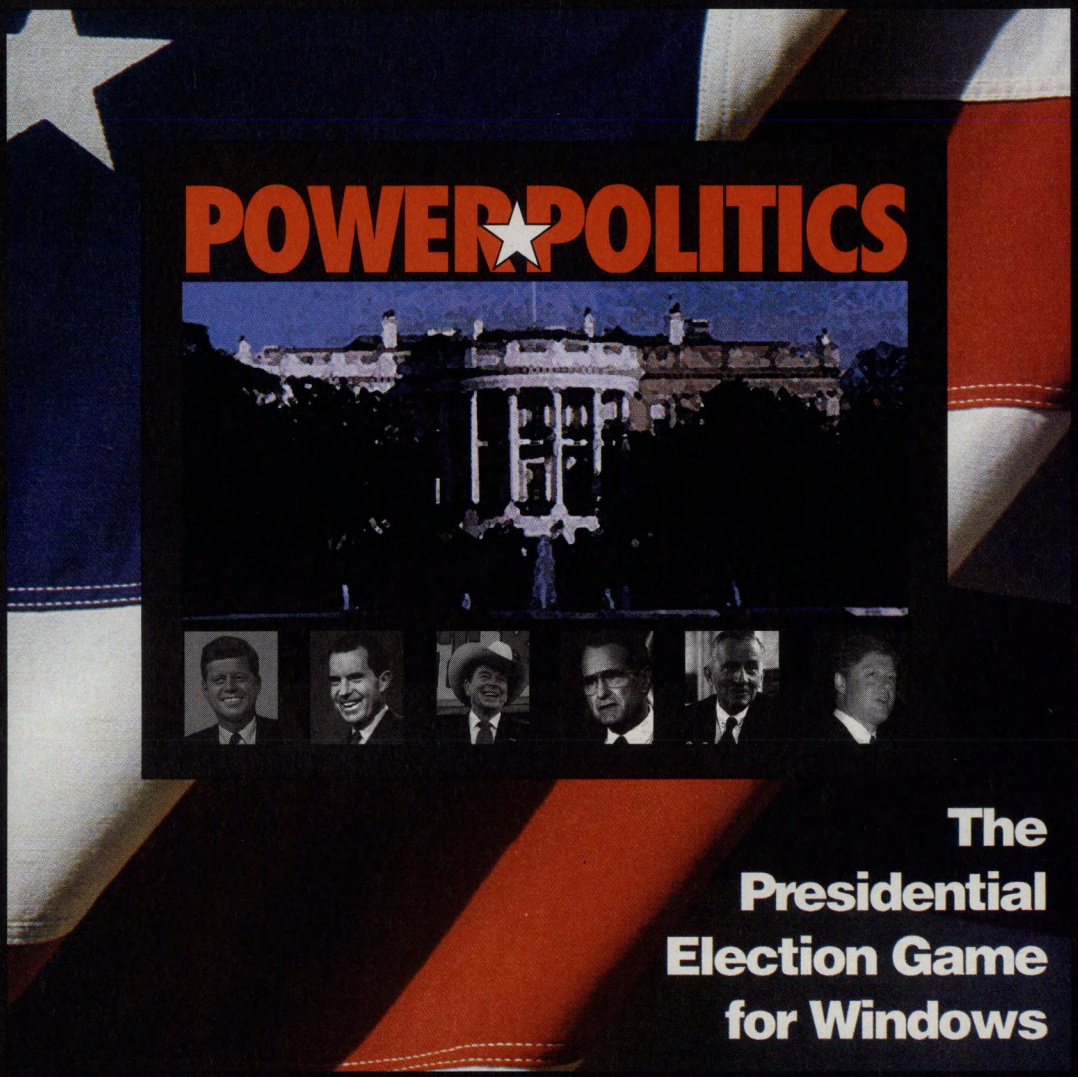

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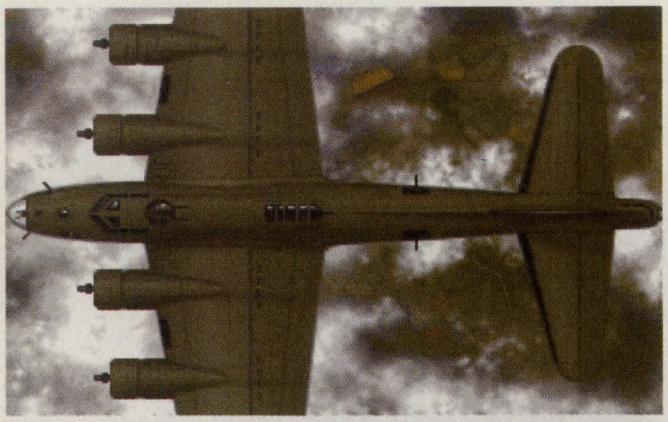
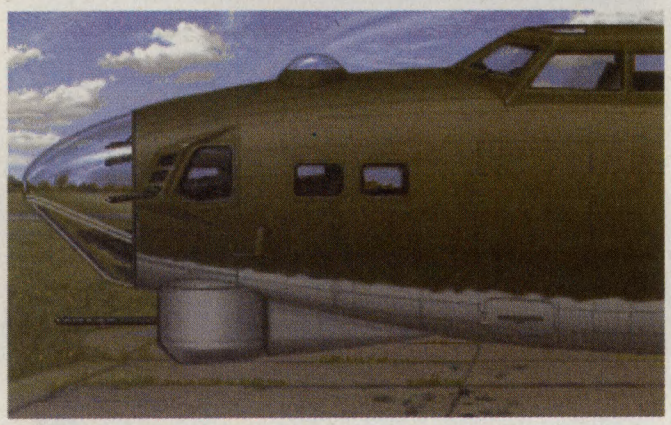




Notes

Missions include:
V1/V2 Rocket Site - France
Oil Refinery - Aschaffenburg
Army Depot - Aachen
Dry Docks - Cuxhaven
Dry Docks - Nantes
Factory Complex - Augsberg
Factory Complex - Einhoven
Factory Complex - Bremen
U-Boat Base - St. Nazaire
U-Boat Base - Brest
U-Boat Base - La Pallice
Aircraft Factory - Brunswick
Tank Factory - Osnabruck
Power Station - Zeebrugge

Finally, it is never made clear where the targets actually are. Are they on the waypoint tracks? On an actual waypoint, or somewhere in between? Sure one can probably make the correct assumption regarding the location of the target, but the program doesn't make it easy. Also, on the map, a B-17 icon runs along the waypoint tracks during the mission. However if the icon flies off the screen the map doesn't automatically scroll with it.

Crew cuts

Before taking off a configuration screen pops up to toggle various realism options, sound and so on. It was disappointing to see this screen after *every* briefing. There should have been an option to toggle it on if required. Once up in the air an excellent bit-map sequence can be accessed that shows a perspective cutaway of the B-17 fuselage. Here, each crew member can be moved and shuffled around as need be. The latter option is essential if the B-17 is attacked and the tail-gunner, for example, is hit (he will be seen slumped at his position). First aid is required and, if warranted, a member of the crew may be taken from his own position and placed in the vacant seat. This sort of 'crew management' takes a bit of getting used to but can be mastered with familiarity.

When accessing a crew position the computer is seen to be in control. Pressing the 'M' key returns the controls to manual mode. The player can then pilot, fire a gun, drop bombs, operate the radio, navigate and so on. Trouble is, when moving to a different station the computer immediately takes over the vacated position. This proved frustrating especially whilst directly piloting the B-17, because moving to another station merely to check on how things were going, toggled the computer pilot on and allowed 'him' to change course. Considering the B-17 is such a large aircraft there shouldn't have been a problem leaving the controls on manual for a few seconds.

Actually flying the B-17 is enjoyable. Throwing a heavy bomber around the skies is a welcome change. Pilot controls are complex and use some of Vektor Grafix own panel technology used in their well-received **Shuttle** simulation. The B-17 cockpit controls are divided into three screens giving a generous amount of options and encouraging a busy feel.

Coming under attack by flak and enemy aircraft is a nervous and exhilarating experience. Especially when it's noted that four gunners are down and two engines are on fire with the third losing oil fast! Being a gunner in this situation makes one feel like being a mouse backed into corner by a large, unfriendly, cat - especially during head-on attacks. When the enemy aircraft do whisk by the gunner's station there is only has a fleeting chance to let fly a burst of lead before it has gone.

Dropping the bombs on the target (even acquiring the target is pretty difficult at the height the B-17 flies at) requires a number of steps to be completed and even then success is not assured.

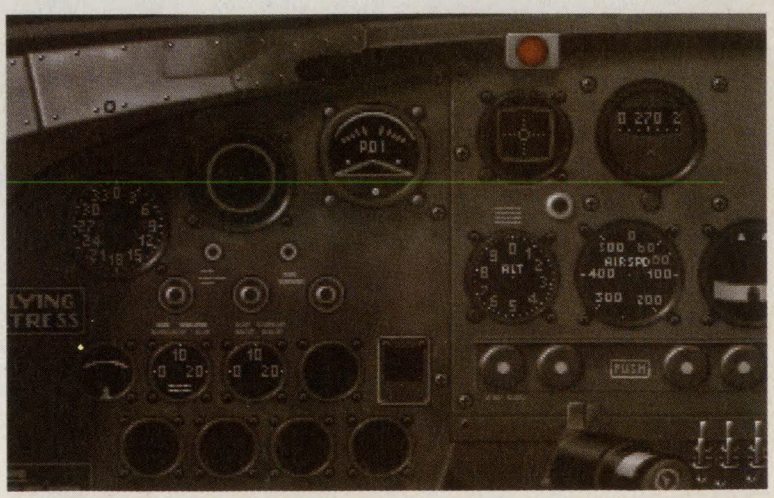
After looking through a port-hole station down onto the target area, the bomb-sight must be initialised, then the bomb doors opened and the cross-hairs manoeuvred onto the target, and then kept there for 20 seconds until the target is acquired. Finally, it's bombs away!

Sounds the same

B-17 is full of 'chrome' that help enhance the game. The crew can be seen bailing out via the external view if the command is given. A complex damage sequence includes engine fires that will worsen to such an extent that the wings will fall off. Injured crew will suffer if a heavy landing is made. I'd recommend stuffing the crew into the radio room during a crash landing as this is the safest part of the aircraft.

Graphically the game is variable. The bit-maps are excellent but the 3D polygons are nothing special, even to the extent of being rather old fashioned looking. Sound is a disappointment. Sure there are engine noises, sounds of guns firing, turret movement and flak but the quality is very average (even on a Roland) and the engine never changes its tone at any time, even when the throttles are varied.

One big requirement is a fast PC a (386/25 minimum) for this is a game which sucks the life out of the CPU. Providing such equipment is available **B-17 Flying Fortress**, despite its blemishes, is recommended as a challenging and absorbing program. ❑



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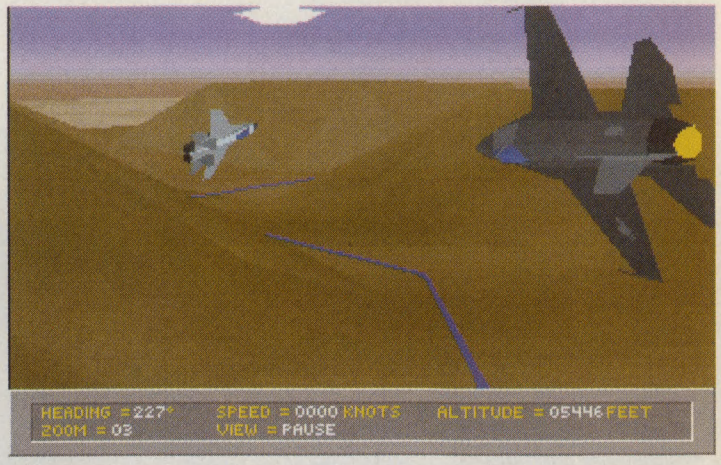

HIGHER AND HIGHER

Strategy and tactics in Falcon 3.0D by Spectrum Holobyte's Daron Stinnett

The 3.0D version of **Falcon** will demand a greater understanding of everything involved in being an F-16 pilot. To be successful, missions must be carefully planned. At the higher difficulty levels, it is no longer effective to just take off and see what happens. Group tactics will need to be formulated, also ingress and egress routes specified. Consideration will have to be given to things like the appropriate altitude for the mission required. Remember that the game will set up with a generic set of waypoints for a given mission profile; it is the player's responsibility to customize the route, taking into consideration terrain and threats. Some of the tactics explained herein will become a standard part of our next Campaign disk, **Operation: Fighting Tiger.**

Missiles & AAA overview

Evading incoming missiles is a tricky business – it requires situational awareness, split second timing, a good understanding of missile performance, knowledge of how the SAM operator thinks, and (most of all) some luck. Most people don't think about missiles until they get a launch warning on their threat indicator. The experienced pilot will consider any missile out there a threat whether it has been launched or not.

By understanding what goes through the mind of a SAM operator or enemy pilot before the missile is launched, one can formulate tactics that will keep missiles from ever acquiring a friendly target.

Surface-To-Air

The skill of the crews launching the missles doesn't affect the effectiveness of the missile or launcher, just the crews themselves. When creating the artificial intelligence in the game, we tried to model the way a human thinks. Therefore, a SAM crew consisting of recruits will do stupid things. As seen in the outline below, having recruits in the SAM launchers will not necessarily mean getting shot down less often.

The first thing noticeable about the recruits is the time it takes for them to launch. There is a very good chance that they will be tying their shoes when a blip first shows up on their radar screen. When they do spot this they still have to decide whether it is are a threat or not. Once they have decided it is a threat, they will lock-on and fire. This takes a little longer because the recruits are not as familiar with the controls. The recruits will tend to get a strong case of target fixation as well. They will lock-on and fire on the plane that poses the most immediate threat – sometimes with multiple missiles. What that means is that the flight leader will tend to get the most missiles fired upon him while the rest of the wing has an easy time. The elites, on the other hand, will divide their attention between multiple targets. They will check in all directions for possible targets and not get so easily confused by planes coming in from multiple directions.

Once the missile is launched, try to turn into the missile, obtaining about a 135 degree aspect angle on the missile. Trying to create a situation where the missile cannot turn hard enough to hit, since all missiles do what is called pure pursuit (ie they don't lead). Pull hard into the missile when it is close, and it should possible to spoof the missile. Don't forget to fire chaff and/or flares.

Infrared Homing (SA-7 Grail)

Ever noticed how quick and agile the SA-7s are? These are very tricky to evade – but fortunately, they don't do much damage. Remember that the guys launching these need to acquire a lock before doing so. So, keep the tail out of view, and don't go to afterburner – unless giving the SA-7 a really good heat source to lock onto is considered to be desirable.

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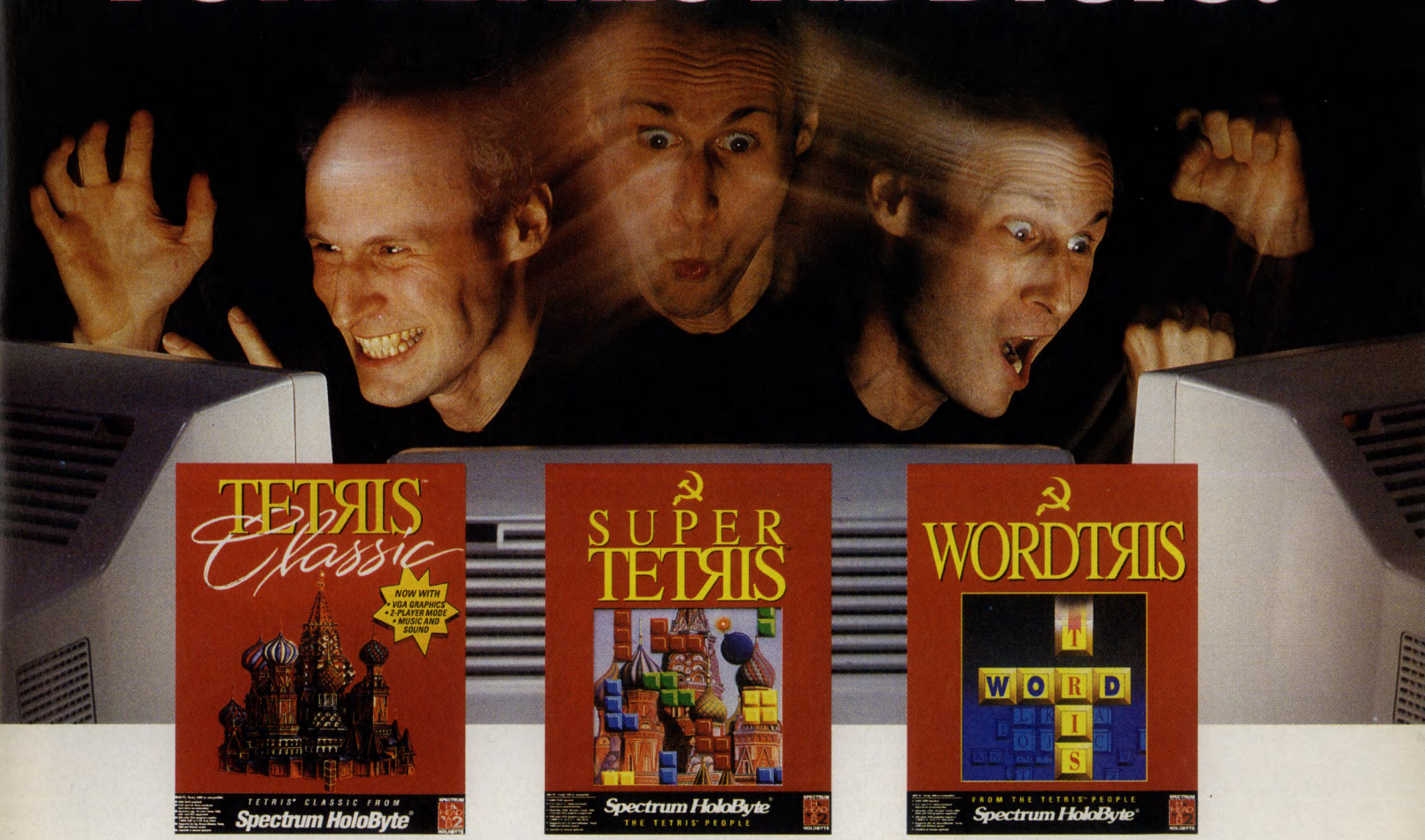

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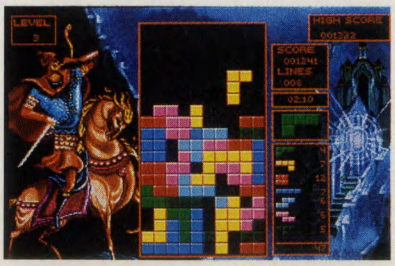

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Reader Service No. 6

Radar Homing (SA-6 / SA-8)

These SAMs are not too bad once familiarity has been gained. Turning on the ECM pod will often break their lock, but remember, the elites are not as likely to panic when their screen goes white and will be a little quicker to switch frequencies and reacquire. The SA-6 and SA-8 SAMs are initially guided by the SAM crews. This allows the SAM operator to depend on his more powerful radar to guide the missile into range, whereupon the missile will switch on its active radar seeker head and guide itself. While the missile is being guided by the crew, jam the launcher's radar. In this case, the missile may just fly by. But, if the crew is able to reacquire the target, the missile will turn around and continue the chase.

Remember to utilize additional flights and waypoints to set up multi-directional attacks. The rookie SAM crews will tend to get confused by this. Use the HARM and Shrike missiles as well. It can be very effective to set up a flight of F-16's for a SEAD (Suppress Enemy Air Defenses) mission. But remember, the crews will tend to lock and fire at the first plane they see, so it is best to send in some CAP guys first to distract the launchers before the SEAD guys pop out from behind the hills.

Air-To-Air

The enemy aircraft in **Falcon 3.0** do not carry a missile that is equivalent to an AIM-120. Their radar missiles perform more like our Sparrow missile. The AA-7 Apex contains a passive radar homing device, it requires the firing aircraft to illuminate the target with its radar while the missile is in flight. Using ECM is less effective against this type of missile, because the ECM pod must jam the more powerful and distant radar carried by enemy aircraft, rather than a smaller radar in the nose of the missile. A more effective technique is to beam the opponent or force him to take his nose off the target. One effective way to do this is to quickly launch a missile at the enemy. That should keep him busy evading and cause *his* missile to lose lock and fly right past. Remember, enemy aces have nerves of steel: if the missile doesn't get off soon enough, they will keep guiding their missile on course, waiting until the last minute to evade the incoming missile.

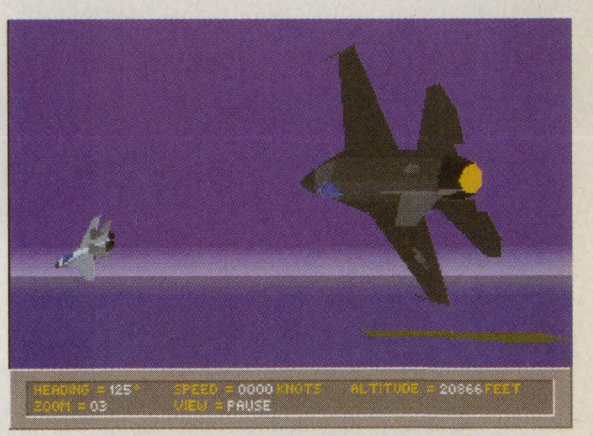
Suppress Enemy Air Defenses

Setting up a SEAD mission can be tricky, but on bombing and CAS missions, it can be rewarding. I have found that three flights works best: one BOMB/CAS, a CAP, and a SEAD flight. Timing is everything on this one. Get the CAP guys in first — they will distract any enemy fighters and SAM launchers, allowing the SEAD flight to come in right behind and launch their Shrikes and HARMs. Following close behind should be the BOMB/CAS flight. Set the SEAD flight for a CAS action code; this will keep them from being distracted by air targets and if they are only given Shrikes and HARMs this will keep them focused only on the SAM and AAA sites. Set the altitude anywhere from 100-200 feet, this will keep them out of visual and radar range, but remember to change the formation to some-thing flat like a vic. Have the flight pop up about 10 miles from the target, this will give them time to find targets and fire.

Enemy Pilots: overview

The engineer who wrote the enemy pilot logic was once asked: 'How did you make the enemy plane logic so realistic?' His response was simple: 'I modeled the pilot's thinking, not the enemy plane's movement.'

The computer-controlled pilots in **Falcon 3.0** have no inherent advantage or disadvantage over a human pilot.



They must acquire a target visually or by radar. They have the same field of view, and their radar operates within the parameters of the real plane. Therefore, if one sneaks up below and behind an enemy (with the radar off), he's oblivious to an enemy presence. Notice that once in a while the wingmen will rock their plane from side to side while looking for bogies; this is because computer pilots cannot see below their plane.

Skill Levels

To help get a better deal with enemy pilots, here is a run-down of the differences between Trainees, Cadets, Veterans and Aces. Trainees - Trainees have learned BCM (Basic Combat Maneuvers) in class but have little real world experience. If they don't get freaked out by an en-

emy presence and they are left an easy shot (like flying straight and level), they will use what they have learned to shoot down enemies. But if they only have to be looked at the least bit funny, they will run away forgetting everything they have learned. Get on their tail, they will probably just start pulling a tight circle. This is where one has the advantage.

Practice one-on-one in Red Flag. Learn to think in three dimensions, the enemy will most likely make a mistake sooner or later, and waiting until that happens is fine... if there is only one enemy out there. But when there are three enemies to every one of the good guys, one of them will see you going in circles and grab that golden opportunity. Keep the plane at its optimum turning rate (450kts) and use energy management to gain the upper hand.

Cadets - These guys are short on skill but long on enthusiasm. They will not run (especially when in numbers) and won't panic as often. They will use a few more advanced maneuvers and are more likely to make a visual sighting.

Veterans - These guys know their stuff. In addition to nerves of steel, they will use every trick in the book. Pay particular attention to energy management when fighting a veteran because he will spot the opportunity to cause an overshoot and will take it without hesitating.

Aces - Besides having 20/10 vision, these guys have the ability to predict one's position even when they cannot see it. If an ace temporarily loses sight of a plane, he will predict the flight path and react accordingly. These guys are veterans that have refined their skills in working together, given the chance they will use cooperative techniques to send one to an early grave.

Tactics

Fighting in groups is very different than one-on-one. When flying against one opponent, it is just a contest of dogfighting skills. But when involved in a furball, it is usually the side who succeeds in confusing and disorienting their opponents that will be victorious. Start thinking about an approaching group of MiGs when they are at least 30 miles out. Consider firing an AMRAAM or two when they get into range. The enemy pilot will have plenty of time to evade the missile, but in doing so he will break up the group and possibly spoil any cooperative tactics they might have tried. The tactic is to split them up and shoot them down one at a time.

Practice cooperative techniques with the squadron. Cadets and Trainees can be especially susceptible to something like the Drag-And-Bag maneuver. They will tend to get target fixation and not realize that it was a trick until they are floating to the ground.

Don't forget to watch for buddies when being tailed by a MiG. It does no good going in circles and one's buddy is trying to help, but is turning just as hard trying to shoot the MiG. Try to get that MiG into perfect position for the wingman to shoot him down. ❑

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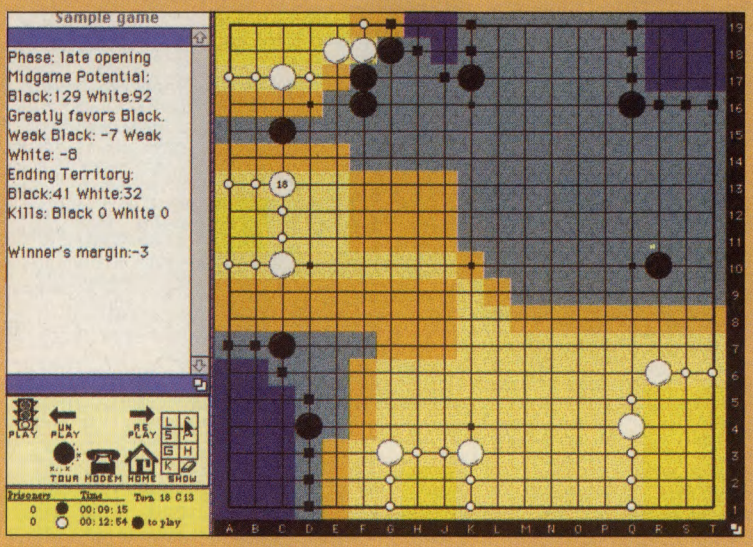

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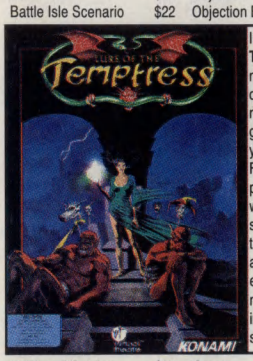

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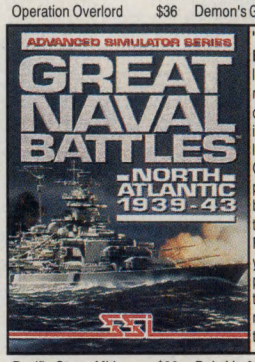

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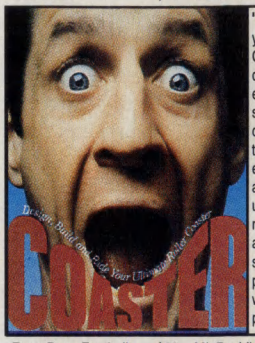
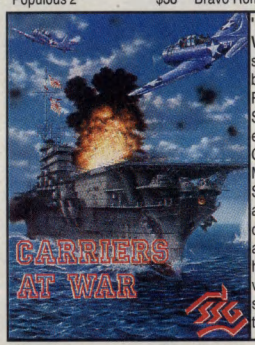


'COASTER' gives you the power of a CAD program to design and experience the wild, stomach-churning coaster of your fantasies. Build with easy to use point and click interface using loops, corners, hills, straightaways, and cork screws. Then experience the ride with in first person point of view. **$32**



'CARRIERS AT WAR' brings to life six crucial carrier battles of WWII; Pearl Harbor, Coral Sea, Midway, Eastern Shores, Santa Cruz, and Great Marianas Turkey Shoot. Seek out and destroy enemy carriers, fleets, and air forces. Features hundreds of individually modeled ships & aircraft from that period. **$39**

'TRISTAN PINBALL' brings you all the excitment of playing real pinball. Flip and nudge your way to the highest score possible using great features from traditional pinball games. Features authentic ball action, wild pinball devices, rocket flippers, thumper bumpers, multiball, extra ball, and stereo sound. **$39**

'RAGNAROK' lets you experience the vast, unbounded world of Norse Mythology. Acquire the arcane skills of polymorph and transformation in order to defeat Surtr and his hordes of Demons. Includes 100 action-packed realms, over 200 magical artifacts, 200 distinct races, & VGA graphics. **$38**

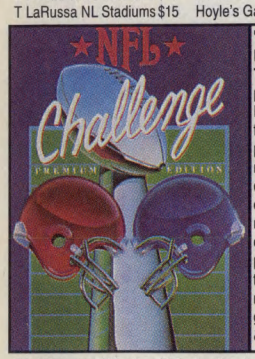
'MEDIA CONCEPT' is an 8 bit sound blaster compatible sound card. Features 11-voice FM music, digitized voice input, digitized voice output, full duplex MIDI interface, 4 watts per channel output, volume control, microphone and line in jacks, a joystock port, and Hardware decompression. **$84**

'PC SYMPHONY' is an 8 bit Adlib compatible sound card for your PC. Features 11-voice FM music, built in 4 watt power amplifier, simultaneous 9 voice, 6 melody, & 5 rhythm sound generation, hardware volume control to 4 ohm & 8 ohm speaker/earphone output, & internal speaker output. **$37**

CHIPS & BITS INC GAME SOFTWARE CALL 800 753 GAME

IBM SPORTS

Super Car Pack $37
Team Suzuki $15
Tennis Cup $32
Tie Break Tennis $14
TKO Boxing $ 6
Tom Landry Football $29
Tony LaRussa Basebll $19
T LaR Fantasy Managr $15
T LaRussa AL Stadiums $15
T LaRussa NL Stadiums $15



'NFL CHALLENGE PREMIUM EDITION' lets you explore the world of Pro Football at its finest. Features play-by-play commentary, scoring drive recaps, new computer coach, new offensive and defensive playbooks, digitized sound effects, multiple background game play, & injuries. **$59**

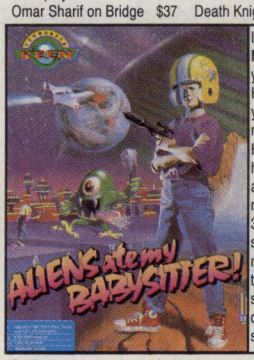
T LaR Teams1901-68 $15
Weaver Baseball 2.0 $17
Weaver Commisnr 2.0 $16
World Circuit $34
World Class Soccer $28

IBM TRADITIONAL

3D Pool $12
3 in 1 Players Pack $19
Acquire $15
Advance to Boardwalk $15
Armada $10
Amarillo Slm 7 Card Std $10
Amarillo Slim Poker $12
Backgammon WIN $19
Battle Chess 1 or 2 $29
Battle Chess WIN $29
Battle Chess 4000 $36
Blackjack DOS/WIN $16
Bridge 7 $31
Bridgemaster $29
Casino Craps $10
Casinos of the World $29
Centerfold Squares $21
Check Mate DOS/WIN $36
Chessmaster 3000 $32
Chessmaster 3000 WIN $38
Chess Net WIN $19
Chess X Collossus $17
Classic 5 DOS/WIN $32
Clue Master Detective $15
Combination Lock $10
Crossword Magic $29
Dealers Choice Poker $29
Demon Blue $10
Dr Thorp's Blackjack $32
Dr Thorp's Mini Blckjck $10
Ewd O'Thorpe Blackjack $12
Electric Jigsaw $12
Faces: Tetris 3 $15
Femmes Fatale $26
Femme Fatale DD 1 $18

IBM TRADITIONAL

GO Tactical Wizard $39
GO Master Toolkit $39
Grand Slam Bridge $22
Grand Slam Bridge 2 $32
Grandmaster Chess $37
Home Alone 2 $26
Home Casino Spectaclr $15
Hong Kong Mah Jong $32
House of Cards $12
Hoyle's Games 1 $21
Hoyle's Games 2 $21
Hoyle's Games 3 or 4 $29
Ishido $17
Jeopardy 1 or 2 $10
Jigsaw Pinups $24
Jones in the Fast Lane $24
LA Law $34
Living Jigsaws $12
Lotto Gold $29
Lexicross $24
Monopoly $24
Omar Sharif on Bridge $37



In **'ALIENS ATE MY BABYSITTER'** you are Comander Keen armed with your neutral stunner and pogo stick. Hop into your homemade rocket and blast off to the rescue. Features 360 degree smooth scrolling action, full musical sound track with, ability to save your game, arcade and cinematic sequences. **$32**

On Target $10
Peanuts $31
Penthouse Jigsaw $24
Pictionary $19
Pinball WIN $29
Planet of Lust $19
Price is Right $15
Prime TIme Hits 1 or 2 $25
Rack'em $12
Risk $24
Risk WIN $29
Rodeo Games $10

'FEMME FATALE' is a digital jigsaw puzzle for adults. The full screen VGA images may be scrambled into a varying number of pieces from 25 to 100. Numerous help features: save & reload multiple games, cancel & undo moves. IBM version includes 16 ravishing girls with optional data disks available. **$26**

Femme Fatale DD 2 $18
Femme Fatale DD 3 $18
Floor 13 $15
Game Maker $68
Games People Play $27
GO Master 5 Dlx $109
GO Master 5 Dlx WIN $109
GO Joseki Genius $39
GO Junior $19
GO Master 5 DOS/WIN $39
GO Scribbler $34

IBM TRADITIONAL

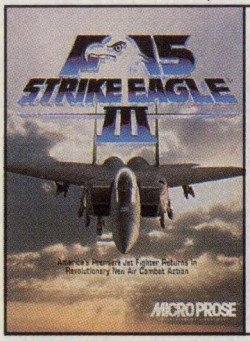
Stratego $31
Strip Poker 3 $31
Strip Pokr 3 DD 1-6 Ea $19
Super Jeopardy $27
Super Tetris $29
Terminator Chess $36
Tetris Classic $27
Trump Castle 2 $24
Trump Castle 3 $34
Trump Castle Data Disk $ 9
Turn-n-Burn $10
Vegas Entrtmnt Pk WIN $20
Video Poker by Masque $12
Video Poker DOS $34
Video Poker WIN $34
Waynes World $26
Welltris $21
Wheel of Fortune 1-3 Ea $10
Wheel of Fortune Gold $15
Wordtris $27
Wrld Chmp Backgamn $24
Wrld Chmp Cribbage $24

HINT BOOKS

688 Attack Sub $10
Advnturs Willy Beamish $10
Altered Destiny $10
A Train $16
Bard's Tale 1 - 3 Ea $10
Buck Rogers 1 or 2 $10
Castle of Dr Brain $10
Champions of Krynn $10
Civilization $16
Code Name Iceman $10
Colonel Bequest 1 or 2 $10
Conquests of Camelot $10
Conquests of Longbow $10
Curse of Azure Bonds $10
Dark Queen of Krynn $10
Death Knights of Krynn $10
Dragon Wars $10
Drakkhen $10
Dynamix Great War Pln $16
EcoQuest $10
Elvira 1 or 2 $10
Eye of Beholder 1 $10
Eye of Beholder 2 $12
Fountain of Dreams $10
Free DC $10
Gateway Savage Frntr $10
Global Conquest w/Disk $21
Gunship 2000 $16
Hard Nova $10
Harpoon Battlebook $16
Heart of China $10
Hero's Quest 1 - 3 Ea $10
Hero's Qst 3 Strat Guide $19
Immortal $10
Indy Jones Lst Crsade $10
Indy Jones Fate Atlantis $10
Island of Dr Brain $10
Jetfighter 2.0 $16
King's Quest 1 - 5 Ea $10
Leisr Suit Larry 1 - 5 Ea $10
Lemmings w/Disk $21
Loom $10
Lord of the Rings 1 or 2 $10
Lost in LA $10
LucasArts Adventure $16
Magic Candle 1 or 2 $10
Manhunter NY or SF $10
Maniac Mansion $10
Martian Dreams $13
Matrix Cubed $10
Mean Street $10
Might & Magic 1 or 2 $10
Might & Magic 3 or 4 $16
Official Sierra Hint Bks $12
Planet's Edge $16
Police Quest 1 - 3 Ea $10
Pool of Darkness $12

HINT BOOKS

Pool of Radiance $10
Populous 1&2 Officl Str $16
Power Monger $10
Power Mngr Strategy Bk $16
Prophecy of the Shadow $12
Quest for Clues 2, 3or4 $21
Quest for Glory 1-3 Ea $10
Railroad Tycoon $10
Rise of the Dragon $10
Run 5 Issue 1 - 20 Ea $ 6



'F15 STRIKE EAGLE 3' will challenge even seasoned pilots. Includes a new visual system that blends 3D polygon and bit-mapped graphics. Features campaign mode, 2 player head-to-head by modem, and 2 player cooperative in separate planes or in the same F15. **$44**

Savage Empire $10
Search for the King $10
Secret Mnky Islnd 1or 2 $10
Secret of Silver Blades $10
Sentinel Worlds $10
Shadow Sorcerer $10
Simcity/Simearth $20
Space Quest 1 - 4 Ea $10
Spellcasting 101 or 201 $10
Starflight 1 or 2 $10
Star Trek 25th Anniv $10
Strategy Plus 3 -11 Ea $ 8
Strategy Plus 12-22 Ea $ 5
Strike Commander $16
Stunt Island $16
Time Quest $10
Treasures Savage Frntr $10
Tunnels & Trolls $16
Ultima 4 - 7 Ea $10
Ultima Avatar Advntures $16
Ultima Underworld $10
Ultima 7 & Underworld $16
V for Victory $16
Wizardry 6 Cosmic Frg $12
Wizardry 7 Crusade $12
Yeager's Air Combat $16

IBM AD & D

AD&D Collectors Ed 2 $45
AD&D Starter Kit $45
Champions of Krynn $19
Curse of Azure Bonds $15
Dark Queen of Krynn $32
Dark Sun $37
Death Knights of Krynn $20
Dragon Strike $15
Dragons of Flame $12
Eye of the Beholder $19
Eye of the Beholder 2 $38
Gateway Savge Frontr $32
Heroes of the Lance $12
Pool of Darkness $38

'PRO AUDIO SPECTRUM PLUS' features hi-fidelity recording & playback in 44kHz **stereo**, advanced 20 voice stereo synthesizer, high performance 16 bit interface, 4 watt per channel amp, built in SCSI interface, MIDI sequencer, waveform editor, four track music studio, & windows 3.1 drivers. **$139**

Pool of Radiance $15
Secret of Silver Blades $15
Shadow Sorcerer $15
Tales Magic: Prophcy S $38
Treasurs Savage Frontr $32
War of the Lance $ 9

IBM ROLE PLAYING

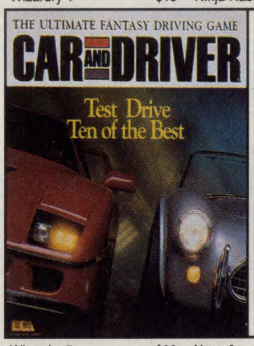
2400 AD $28
Autoduel $26
Bad Blood $31

IBM ROLE PLAYING

Bard's Tale 2 $19
Bard's Tale 3 $32
Bard's Tale Cnstrctn St $19
Battletech 1 $12
Battletech 2 $31
Black Crypt $32
Bloodwych $15
Buck Rogers 1 $12
Captain Blood $ 9
Captive $30
Celtic Legends $32
Challenge of 5 Realms $44
Champions $37
Conan $29
Corporation $19
Cybergenic Ranger $32
Cyber Space $29
Darklands $39
Drakkhen $37
Dragon Wars $12
Dusk of the Gods $29
Elvira 1 or 2 $29
Escape from Hell $17
Fire King $19
Flames of Freedom $28
Fountain of Dreams $15
Four Crystals of Trazere $32
Gods $26
Hard Nova $17
Heaven & Earth $32
Hero's Quest 1 EGA $21
Hero's Quest 1 $32
Hero's Quest 2 $21
Hero's Quest 3 $39
Immortal $17
Keys to Maramon $12
King's Bounty $15
Knights of Legend $30
Legacy of the Necrmncr $19
Legend $31
Lord of the Rings 1 $32
Lord of the Rings 2 $37
Loremaster $39
Lure of the Temptress $37
M $45
Magic Candle 1 $12
Magic Candle 2 or 3 $38
Matrix Cubed $32
Mechwarrior $19
Megatraveller 1 $16
Megatraveller 2 $19
Megatraveller 3 $39
Midwinter 1 $12
Might & Magic 1 or 2 $12
Might & Magic 3 $38
Might & Magic 4 or 5 $46
Mines of Titan $12
Mission Impossible $19
Murder $29
Obitus $34
Pirates Gold $34
Planet's Edge $38
Prophecy 1 $12

IBM ROLE PLAYING

Questron 2 $12
Rings of Medusa $24
Sea Rogue $39
Sentinel Worlds $ 9
Sleeping Gods Lie $29
Space 1889 $16
Space Hulk $38
Space Inc $34
Space Rogue $30
Space Wrecked $19
Spellbound $39
Spellcraft Aspct of Valor $38
Spell Jammer Pirtes RS $38
Spirit of Excaliber $19
Starflight 1 $17
Starflight 2 $17
Star Saga 2 $19
Sword of the Samurai $ 9
Swrd Samrai & Pirates $16
Tangled Tales $21
Terran Envoy $12
Third Courier $ 6
Times of Lore $28
Tunnels & Trolls $15
Twilight 2000 $34
Twilight 2001 $39
Ultima Martian Dreams $37
Ultima Savage Empire $34
Ultima Trilogy $35
Ultima Trilogy 2 $45
Ultima 4 $35
Ultima 5 $35
Ultima 6 False Prophet $39
Ultima 7 Black Gate $46
Ultima Stygian Abyss $48
Uncharted Waters $42
Vengeance of Excalibur $19
Windwalker $28
Wizardry Trilogy $32
Wizardry 4 $19



'CAR & DRIVER' lets you test drive 10 of the best performance cars like the Porshe 959, Shelby Cobra, and Ferrari Testarossa. Features 10 different tracks, bit-mapped landscapes, drive in any direction or off road, head to head via modem, instant replay, 256 color VGA, and sound support. **$38**

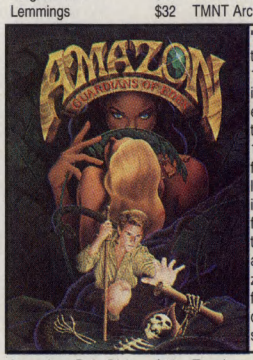
Wizardry 5 $32
Wizardry 6 Cosmic Frg $37
Wizardry 7 Crusaders $39

IBM ACTION/ARCADE

Airborne Ranger $12
Aliens ate my Babysitter $32
Amazing Spiderman $ 9
Arachnaphobia $28
Artura $ 6
Back to the Future 2 $15
Back to the Future 3 $15
Barbarian $ 9
Bargon Attack $24
Bart Simpsn House Wrd $31
Battle Master $37
Battlestorm $32
Bill & Ted's Excllnt Adv $19
Blockbuster $ 5
Blockout $28
Brain Blaster $28
Budokan $17
Colorado $ 6
Continuum $29
Cool Croc Twins $24
Crackdown $17
Dark Century $27
Day of the Viper $19
D Generation $32
Dig Dug $ 6
Dr Doom's Revenge $ 9
Dragon's Breath $27
Dragon's Lair 1 $24
Dragon's Lair 2 $34
Drgn's Lair Singe Cstl $34
Freakn Funky Fuzzballs $19
Galactic Conqueror $31
Galactic Empire $27
Galaxian $ 6
Gauntlet 1 or 2 $ 9
Gobliiins $24

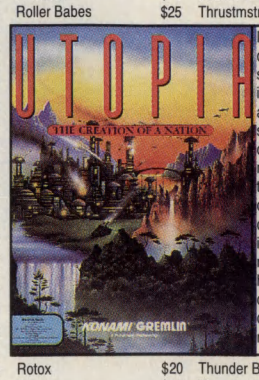
IBM ACTION/ARCADE

Gold of the Aztecs $29
Grave Yardage $12
Gremlins 2 $ 9
Guy Spy $29
Hard Driving 2 $38
Hare Raising Havoc $32
Home Alone $27
Killing Cloud $19
Knight Force $29
Lemmings $32



'AMAZON' recaptures the fun of the 1950's drive-in movies. Travel to unexplored regions of the Amazon, fight 10 foot ants, and find emeralds stolen by Cortez. Amazing cinematic effects such as multiple camera angles, flashbacks, zooms, pans, & fades. Features full digitized voices & sound effects. **$39**

Lemmings Data Disk $19
Light Corridor $29
Light Quest $32
Loopz $24
Monty Python $15
Ms Pac Man $ 6
M.U.D.S. $16
Mystical $27
Nevermind $25
Night Breed $15
Night Shift $17
Ninja Rabbits $10
Nova 9 $21
Obliterator $ 6
Oil's Well $15
Pac Man $ 9
Pick N Pile $27
Pipe Dream $19
Pitfighter $22
Powerdrome $12
Power Hits: Battletech $32
Power Hits: Sci Fi $32
Punisher $ 9
Roller Babes $25



In **'UTOPIA'** you decide whether to spend funds building solar panels and life support structures or a security HQ and war machines. Features 10 independent alien races to defend against, 3D isometric command views, overhead maps of fuel, oredeposits, radar data, and enemy movements. **$31**

Rotox $20
Savage $19
Sierra Arcade Bundle $24
Silpheed $21
Simpsons Arcade Game $31
Sliders $27
Space Ace 1 or 2 $34
Space Wars $37
Speedball 2 $25
Stellar 7 $21
Stormlord $ 9

IBM ACTION /ARCADE

Super Off Road $15
Super Pac Man $ 9
Super Space Invaders $25
Take a Break Crosswrd $29
Take a Break Pinball $29
Take a Break Pool $29
Taking of Beverly Hills $24
Teenage Mtnt Nnja Trtl $25
TMNT Manhatten Miss $31
TMNT Arcade $24
Terminator $34
Tetris Classic WIN $27
Tristan Pinball $39
Troika $19
Vaxine $24
Viking Child $32
Volfied $24
Wild Streets $31
Wild Wheels $32
Wrath of the Demon $29
X Men $ 9
X Men 2 $25
Xenocide $12

IBM HARDWARE

Ad Lib Sound Card $49
Ad Lib Gold 1000 $179
Adlib Progrmrs Manual $27
Adlib Surround Sound $64
Adlib Telephone Module $64
Ad Lib Visual Composr $75
Ad Lib Speakers $15
Flight Stick $43
Flight Stick w Falcon $46
Game Card 3 $39
Gravis Ultrasound Brd $149
Champ Joystick $24
Maxx Control Yoke $59
Maxx Rudder Peddals $39
Mouse 3 Button $29
Pro Audio Spectrum 16 $199
Pro Audio Spctrm Plus $139
Sound Blaster $99
Sound Blaster Pro $189
Sound Blstr Pro Basic $159
Snd Blaster Speakers $15
Snd Blaster Voice Edtr $54
Sound Star Snd Board $14
Thrustmaster Joystick $69
Thrstmstr Pro Joystick $109
Thrstmstr Ruddr Pedal $109
Thrustmstr Weapn Cntrl $79
Thunder Board SndBrd $84
Thunder Board for WIN $109
Thunder Board Spkrs $15
Video Blaster $349

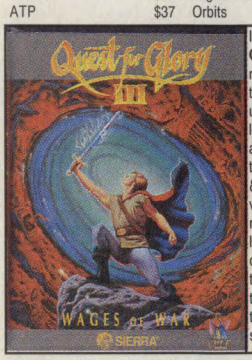
IBM SIMULATION

688 Attack Sub $19
A10 Avenger $46
A10 Tank Killer 1.5 $34
Aces of the Pacific $42
Aces Pacific Mission 1 $27

CHIPS & BITS INC GAME SOFTWARE CALL 800 753 GAME

IBM SIMULATION

Aces Pacific Mission 2 $27
Aces over Europe $46
Aces Europe Mission 1 $27
Aces Europe Mission 2 $27
AH 64 Helicopter $46
Air Force Commander $34
Allied Forces Bundle $29
Armor Geddon $29
ATAC $29
ATP $37

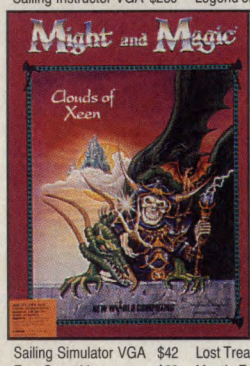


In **'QUEST FOR GLORY 3'** you must bring peace to the land of Tarna using a balance of loyalty, friendship and honor. Features hand painted & digitized art, video captured animation, multiple solutions depending on abilities, sophisticated conversation & combat systems, and full music support. **$39**

B17 Flying Fortress $39
Battle Command $19
Battlefield 2000 $37
Birds of Prey $32
Blue Max:Aces WW 1 $12
Campaign Strat Flight S $37
Car and Driver $38
Cardinal of the Kremlin $27
Carrier Command $12
Conqueror Multi Tank $16
Crash Course $ 6
Design yr own Railroad $29
Dynamics Bundle $39
El Fish $41
Elite Plus $19
Eye of the Storm $29
F117A Nighthawk $42
F14 Tomcat $19
F15 Strike Eagle 2 $19
F15 SE2 Scenario Disk $17
F15 Strike Eagle 3 $44
F19 Stealth Fighter $24
F22 ATF $39
F29 Retaliator $32
Falcon AT $19
Falcon 3.0 $45
Falcon 3 Scenario 1 $22
Fire & Forget 2 $30
Flight of the Intruder $19
Flight Simulator 4.0 $42
Aircraft Scenry Design $35
Flight Planner $24
New Facilities Locator $27
Sound, Graphics Upgrde $27
Fly Grand Canyon 3D $45
Gunboat $33
Gunship $12
Gunship 2000 $39
Gunship 2000 Scenario $24
Harrier Combat Sim $ 6
Heatwave $25
Heros of the 357th $32

IBM SIMULATION

M1 Tank Platoon $34
Mantis Exprmntl Fghtr $39
Megafortress $26
Megafrtrss Mission 1 $26
Megafrtrss Mission 2 $26
Megafortress 3D Editor $27
Megafortress Mega Pck $38
Miami Enforcer $39
Mig 29 Fulcrum $32
Orbits $37
Power Boat Simulator $39
Rapcon $29
Reach for the Skies $31
Red Baron $39
Red Baron Missn 1 or 2 $24
Red Storm Rising $14
Road&Track Grand Prix $37
Sailing Instructor CGA $199
Sailing Simulator CGA $39
East Coast Voyages $39
West Coast Voyages $39
Sailing Instructor VGA $239



In **'MIGHT AND MAGIC: CLOUDS OF XEEN'** you must lead a band of adventurers to bring down the evil Lord Xeen. Features full 256 color VGA support, full screen animation, animated icons to warn of danger, automapping, point & click interface, digitized speech, sound effects, & musical score. **$46**

Sailing Simulator VGA $42
East Coast Voyages $39
West Coast Voyages $39
Scenery Collectn A or B $37
Secret Weapons Lftwff $44
S Weapons Exp1 P38 $21
S Weapons Exp2 P80 $21
S Weapons Exp3 He162 $21
S Weapons Exp4 Do335 $21
Shuttle $29
Sim Earth 4000 $42
Sim Farm $41

'SIEGE' is a medieval style castle assault game. You are given four castles to attack and defend in a one castle scenario or an extended campaign. Includes historical troops (French, English, Celtic), mythical troops (Elves, Trolls, Giants), siege towers, battering rams, catapults, and oil. **$38**

Hoverforce $31
Hunt for Red October $22
Hyperspeed $34
Jet Fighter 2 $39
Jet Fighter 2 Missn Disk $19
Jump Jet $39
Knights of the Sky $29
Land, Sea & Air 1 or 2 $39
LHX Attack Chopper $17
Life & Death 1 or 2 $23
Lightspeed $29
Sim Life $41
Silent Service 2 $34
Stormovik $15
Strike Aces $19
Strike Commander $45
Stunt Driver $15
Stunt Island $34
Tank $37
Team Yankee $34
Team Yankee 2 $29
Test Drive 2 $30

IBM SIMULATION

Test Drive 2: Collection $29
Test Drive 2: CA Challg $15
Test Drive 2: Euro Chllg $15
Test Drive 2: Muscle Cr $10
Test Drive 2: Supercars $15
Test Drive 3 $29
TD3 Road & Car Disk $19
TFH & BH1942 $44
Thunderhawk $24
Thunderstrike $27
Top Gun Danger Zone $31
Tracon 1 or 2 WIN $34
Tracon 2 $29
Ultrabots $37
Unnatural Selection $32
Vette $29
Virtual Reality Studio $49
Wing Commander 1 $39
WC1 Secret Mssn 1 or 2 $19
Wing Commander 2 $45
WC2 Opertn Mod 1 or 2 $27
WC2 Speach Pack $15
Wolfpack $15
Yeager's Air Combat $38

IBM CD ROM

7th Guest $56
Aesop's Fables $32
Battle Chess DOS/WIN $46
Buzz Aldrin Race Space $59
Capstone Game Collect $45
Conan $24
Cnqst Robin Hood WIN $42
Don Quixote $32
Dune $35
El Grito Del Jaguar WIN $46
Fascination WIN $39
Jones in the Fast Lane $42
King's Quest 5 WIN $42
Legend of Kyrandia $49
Lost Treasurs Infocom $46
Mantis Expermtl Fighter $45
Omar Sharif on Bridge $46
Secret of Monkey Island $49
Secret Weapon's Luftwff $59
Shuttle $24
Space Quest 4 $42
Spirit Excalibur $24
Star Child $32
Star Trek 25th Annivrsy $46
Stellar 7 $42
Ultima Bundle $59
Where in World CSD $64
White Horse Child $32
Wing Commandr Bundle $45

IBM CHARACTER EDITORS

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Champions of Krynn $16
Curse of Azure Bonds $16
Dark Heart of Uukrul $16
Dark Queen of Krynn $16
Death Knights of Krynn $16
Drakkhen $16
Escape from Hell $16
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Magic Candle 1-3 Each $16
Megatraveller 1 or 2 $16
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IBM CHARACTER EDITORS

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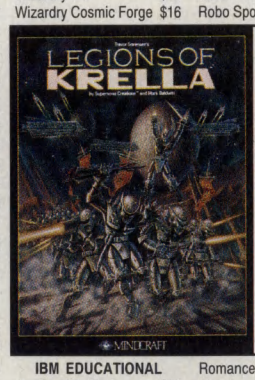
Tunnels & Trolls $16
Ultima 4-7 Ea $16
Ultima Martian Dreams $16
Ultima Savage Empire $16
Ultima Underworld $16
Wizardry 4 or 5 $16
Wizardry 1-3 $16
Wizardry Cosmic Forge $16



'LEGIONS OF KRELLA' is another in the Star Fleet series of space strategy simulations. You command more than 100 legions of battle hardened Krellan warriors in Battlecruisers,destroyers and troop transports . Features real time combat, state-of-the-art graphics animation and sound. **$38**

IBM EDUCATIONAL

Castle of Dr Brain $29
EcoQuest 1 or 2 $34
Island of Dr Brain $29
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J Nicklaus CD 1-5 Ea $15
Mean 18 Golf $30
Nascar Challenge $31
PGA Tour Golf $38
PGA Tour Course Disk1 $17
Playmaker Football $32
Tom Landry Football $29
Wayne Gretzky Hockey $36
Weaver Baseball $32

MAC WARGAMES

Americn Civil War Vol 1 $29
Civil War No Grtr Glry $42
Halls of Montezuma $29
Harpoon Scenario Editr $27
Panzer Battles $29
Patton Strikes Back $37
Rommel North Africa $29
UMS 2 $34
UMS 2 Planet Editor $29
V for Victory $38

MAC STRATEGY

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Ancient Art War at Sea $29

In **'DISCOVERY IN THE STEPS OF COLUMBUS'** you explore new worlds, battle pirates, create cities and trade with other countries to further your empire. Features 6 new worlds to discover, land & sea combat, 8 ship types, 4 different maps, 5 competing nations, and a simple point and click interface. **$34**

Balance of the Planet $19
Castles $36
Citadel $26
Command HQ $39
Cyber Empire $32
Darwin's Dilemma $32
Genghis Khan $37
Gold of the Americas $29
Go Master 5 $109
Harpoon $39
Harpoon Set 2 or 3 $22

MAC STRATEGY

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Harpoon Challengr Pck $59
Harpoon Chllngr Pck SE $59
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Mission Starlight $29
Moonbase $29
Operation Combat $15
Railroad Tycoon $45
Reach for the Stars $29
Robo Sport $35
Romance 3 Kingdoms $42
Simcity $29
Simcity Graphic 1 or 2 $23
Simcity Terrain Editor $15
Sim Earth $41
Spaceward Ho! $37
Strategic Conquest $37
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Warlords $29

MAC ADVENTURE

Adventrs Willie Beamish $39
Conquest of Longbow $39
Heart of China $34
Indy Jones Grphc Advtr $32
King's Quest 5 $39
Leisure Suit Lrry1 Color $34
Leisure Suit Larry5 $39
Loom $29
Lost Treasures Infocom $46
Mutant Beach $43
Out of this World $36
Police Quest 3 Color $34
Rise of the Dragon $34
Secret of Monkey Island $38
Sky Shadow $28
Space Quest 3 or 4 $34
Where Europe CSD $30
Where Time CSD $30
Where USA CSD $30
Where World CSD $27

MAC TRADITIONAL

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Bridge 7 $31
Checkmate $36
Chessmaster 2100 $32
Classic 5 $32
Cribbage King Gin King $27
Crossword Magic $32
Go Master 5 $39

MAC TRADITIONAL

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Stratego $31
Super Tetris $32
Swap $29
Tetris $24
Wordtris $29

MAC ROLE PLAYING

Curse of Azure Bonds $38
Dark Queen of Krynn $38
King's Bounty $15
Might & Magic 3 $38
Pirates $34
Pools of Darkness $38
Pools of Radiance $32
Secret of Silver Blades $38
Spirit of Excalibur $29
Starflight 1 or 2 $38
Vengeance of Excalibur $29
Windwalker $28
Wizardry 1 $28
Wizardry 2 $33
Wizardry Cosmic Forge $37

MAC ARCADE

4D Boxing $32
Armor Alley $32
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Dragon's Lair $34
Dragon's Lair Color $34
Dragon's Lair 2 $34
Dragon's Lair Esc Singe $34
Faces/Tetris 3 $25
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Nova 9 Color $21
Oids $25
Pick n Pile $28
Pipe Dream $19
Shufflepuck Cafe $27
Space Ace $34

'GAME MAKER' allows you to create 256 color VGA adventure and arcade games without programming. Features sound support, multiple levels per game, import images from .GIF files, character & monster animation, scrolling in all directions, add or subtract hit points, lives, score and money. **$68**

Space Ace 2 $34
Space Ace 2 Color $34
Starglider $29
Tesserae $32
Thexder 1 $15
Tristan $48
Welltris $24
Xerion $25

MAC SIMULATION

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Design your own Train $32
F40 Pursuit Simulator $31
Falcon $34
Falcon AT $37
Falcon Color $46
Grand Prix Circuit $24
Hunt for Red October $21
Life and Death $32
Megafortress $38
Red Baron Color $39
Sands of Fire $32
Sim Ant $35
Sim City Supreme $46
Specter $37
Tank $37
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Test Drive 2 CA Challng $15
Test Drive 2 Euro Chllg $15
Test Drive 2 Muscle Car $15
Test Drive 2 Supercars $15
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Tracon 2 $29
Vette $33
Yeager's AFT $32

MAC EDUCATIONAL

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Dvorak on Typing $32
EcoQuest 2 Color $34
Rodney's Funscreen $32

AMIGA WARGAMES

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Action Stations Scenario $14
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Battle Tank Barbarossa $36
Blitzkrieg $29
Blitzkrieg May 1940 Campaign $34 $29
Charge of Light Brigade $34
Civil War No Grtr Glory $42
Conflict Korea $36

'TASK FORCE 1942' gives you a chance to command a fleet of destroyers, cruisers, and battleships against aggressive enemy forces in the South Pacific. Features night combat, realistic weather conditions, blinding explosions, flares, torpedoes, ability to send orders to ships & convoys, and VGA graphics. **$39**

Conflict Middle East $36
Dreadnoughts $42
Dreadnoughts Ironclads $29
Dreadnoughts Bismark $29
Fire Brigade $35
Fleet Med $36
Gettysburg Turning Pnt $36
Halls of Montezuma $28
Harpoon $38
Harpoon Battle Set 2 $19
Harpoon Battle Set 3 $19
Harpoon Battle Set 4 $26
Harpoon Challngr Pack $59
Harpoon Chllng Pck SE $59
Harpoon Scenario Editr $27
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Kreigsmarine $36
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Main Battle Tnk C Grmy $36
Main Battle Tnk N Grmy $36

AMIGA WARGAMES

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Typhoon of Steel $15
UMS 2 $34
Wargame Constrctn Set $12
Warhead $34
Waterloo $12
Western Front $37
White Death $29

AMIGA STRATEGY

Afrika Corps $34
Archipelagos $26
Armada 2525 $39
Bandit King Anct China $37
Battle Isle $32
Beast Busters $24
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Black Gold $28
Breach 1 Scenario Disk $16
Breach 2 $32
Breach 2 Scenario Disk $15
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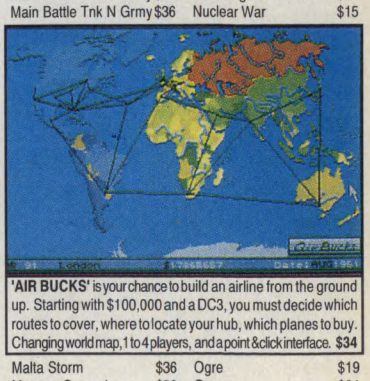
Merchant Colony $34
Millenium $24
Moonbase $29
Navy Moves $27
Nobunaga's Ambition $37
Nuclear War $15



'AIR BUCKS' is your chance to build an airline from the ground up. Starting with $100,000 and a DC3, you must decide which routes to cover, where to locate your hub, which planes to buy. Changing world map, 1 to 4 players, and a point &click interface. **$34**

Malta Storm $36
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Operation Spruance $34
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AMIGA STRATEGY

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Riders of Rohan	$31
Romance 3 Kingdoms	$42
Romance 3 Kingdoms 2	$42
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AMIGA ADVENTURE

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Indy Jones Fate Atlantis	$38
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James Bond Stealth Affr	$34
Joan of Arc	$31
KGB	$19
Khalaan	$34
King's Bounty	$15

AMIGA ADVENTURE

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Sex Vixens from Space	$28
Shadow of the Beast	$29
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Space Quest 2	$15
Space Quest 3	$34
Space Quest 4	$34
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Street Rod 2	$27
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Time Machine	$34
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Treasure Savage Frontr	$32
Turrican	$28
Universe 3	$34
War in Middle Earth	$15
Warriors of Legend	$19
Where in Europe CSD	$34
Where in USA CSD	$34
Where in World CSD	$27
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Wonderland	$19

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Mean 18 Golf	$30
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PGA Tour Golf Course 1	$17
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Keys to Maramon	$32
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Legend of the Lost	$34
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Lure of the Temptress	$37
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Midwinter	$28
Might & Magic 2	$38

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Chase HQ	$28
Continuum	$32
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Crackdown	$20
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Cyber Space	$29
Dark Castle	$31
Dark Century	$29
Day of the Viper	$33
Dragon's Lair	$34
Dragon's Lair 2	$34
Dragon Lair Esc SingeC	$34
Fast Track	$25
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Fire Power	$17
Flood	$29
Globulus	$22
Golden Axe	$17
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Heavy Metal	$35
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Hoverforce	$31
Hyperforce	$28
Killing Cloud	$15
Killing Game Show	$29
Knights of Crystallion	$37

AMIGA ARCADE

Treasure Trap	$28
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Volfied	$24
Warlock	$25
Warzone	$27
Wild Streets	$31
Wild Wheels	$32
Xenophobe	$25
Zany Golf	$18
Zone Warrior	$26

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Megafortress	$38
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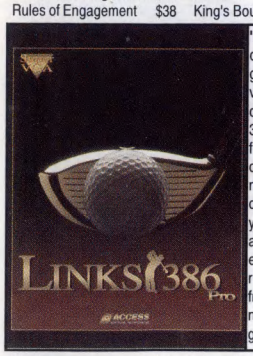
Megafortrss Mssn Dsk 2	$27
Reach for the Skies	$31
Red Baron	$34
Red Storm Rising	$29
Sherman M4	$34
Shuttle	$29
Silent Service 1	$15
Silent Service 2	$34



'LINKS 386 PRO' offers **Super VGA** graphics and advanced features designed for your 386 or 486. New features include computer opponent, save game option that allows your friends to play against you in an existing game, pre-recorded games from worthy opponents, and many game modes. **$42**

In **'REX NEBULAR AND THE COSMIC GENDER BENDER'** you are an interstellar explorer who embarks on a romping space adventure. Journey underwater & underground as you unravel the many puzzles of Terra Androgena. VGA & sound support. **$39**

'EMPIRE DELUXE' is the update to the classic game of exploration and conquest. Expand your sphere of influence to span first a continent and then the world. Completely redone 256 color VGA graphics, digitized sound effects, and an intuitive player interface, network and modem play. **$39**

Simcity	$33
Simcity Terrain Editor	$15
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Starfleet 1	$38
Stock Market	$15
Sword of Aragon	$12
Theater of War	$32
Third Reich	$27
Traders	$29
Uncharted Waters	$42
Utopia	$31
Warlords	$32
Worlds at War	$29

King's Quest 1	$19
King's Quest 2	$15
King's Quest 3	$15
King's Quest 4	$34
King's Quest 5	$34
Leather Goddesses	$15
Legend of Faerghail	$28
Legend of Kyrandia	$35
Leisure Suit Larry 1 Enh	$34
Leisure Suit Larry 1	$24
Leisure Suit Larry 2	$15
Leisure Suit Larry 3	$24

AMIGA TRADITIONAL

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Battle Chess	$29
Battle Chess 2 Chinese	$29
Checkmate	$36
Chessmaster 2100	$34
Clue Master Detective	$28
Cribbage King Gin King	$28
Harpoon Designr Series	$32
Home Alone 2	$29
Hoyle's Book Games 1	$21
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Hoyle's Book Games 3	$29
Ishido	$36

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Watne Gretzky Hockey	$36
Wayne Gretzky Hcky 2	$34
Wayne Gretzky League	$28
World Circuit	$34
World Class Leaderbrd	$26
World Class LB CD 1	$15
World Class LB CD 2	$15
World Class LB CD 3	$15
World Champ Soccer	$12

Might & Magic 3	$38
Murder	$29
Pirates	$19
Plan 9 from Outr Space	$31
Pool of Radiance	$15
Prophecy of Shadow	$38
Rings of Medusa	$34
Secret of Silver Blades	$15
Shadow Sorcerer	$32
Sleeping Gods Lie	$29
Space Ace	$34
Space Inc	$34
Space Rogue	$34
Spirit of Excalibur	$19
Starflight 1	$32
Starflight 2	$32
Sword of Twilight	$34
Terran Envoy	$27
Third Courier	$34
Times of Lore	$28
Twilight 2000	$39
Ultima 4	$39
Ultima 5	$39
Vengeance of Excalibur	$19
Windwalker	$28
Wizardry Cosmic Forge	$39
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AMIGA ADVENTURE

Adventr Willie Beamish	$34
Altered Destiny	$37
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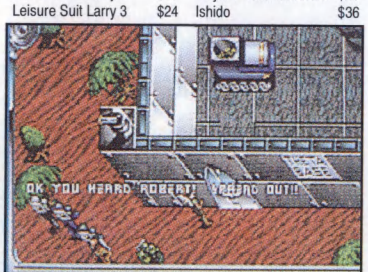
Arthur Quest Excalibur	$34
B.A.T.	$34
Betrayal	$29
Black Cauldron	$28
Cadaver	$27
Chambr Sci Mutant Prst	$31
Chuck Rock	$15
Codename Iceman	$15
Colonel's Bequest	$15
Conquest of Camelot	$15
Conquest of Longbow	$34
Courtroom	$34
Crime Does Not Pay	$32
Cruise for a Corpse	$34
Cyber Empire	$32
Damocles	$31
Dark Half	$34
Darkman	$29
Dark Side	$28
Death Bringer	$28
Dick Tracy	$22
Duck Tales	$31
Dune	$35
East vs West Berlin	$27



'MERCENARIES' lets you command a group of soldiers on interplanetary combat missions. Each mercenary, civilian, and alien has their own personality. Produce your own missions with the built in scenario editor. **$38**

Leisure Suit Larry 5	$39
License to Kill	$28
Lord of the Rings Vol 2	$36
Lost Treasures Infocom	$39
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Moebius	$41
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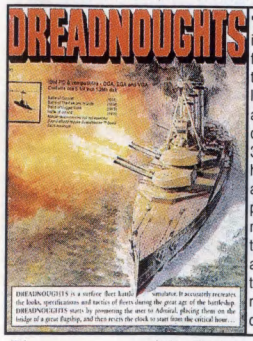
Oil's Well	$21

Jones in the Fast Lane	$24
Monopoly	$24
Omar Sharif on Bridge	$32
Peanuts	$31
Penthouse Jigsaw	$24
Pinball Dreams	$32
Pool Shark	$15
Risk	$24
Scrabble	$24
Shanghaii 2	$32
Solitarie's Journey	$36
Solitaire Royale	$24
Spot	$15
Stratego	$32
Strip Poker 3	$29
Swap	$29
Tetris	$24
Trump Castle 2	$32



'DREADNOUGHTS' is a WWI surface fleet battle simulator. It recreates the look, specifications, and tactics of fleet combat. Features 3D views, comprehensive manuals and sea charts, a potent English command parser, one or two player mode and computer controlled ships, gunnery and damage control. **$42**

AMIGA SPORTS

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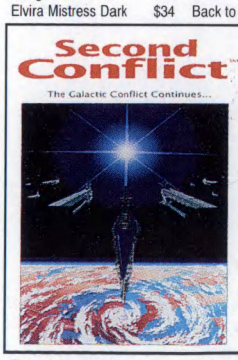

'SECOND CONFLICT' is a windows game of interstellar strategy and conquest. Test your skill against friends or the computer in one of 6 exciting scenarios or create your own with the built in editor. Choose between warships, stealthships, missiles, & transports in your quest to rule the galaxy. **$34**

Elf	$32
Free DC	$34
Future Wars	$34
Godfather	$12
Gold Rush	$24
Heart of China	$34
Heimdall	$19
Horror Zombies Crypt	$34
Hostage	$31
Hound of Shadow	$19
Hunter	$24

Omnicron Conspiracy	$29
Out of this World	$36
Planet of Lust	$28
Police Quest 1	$24
Police Quest 2	$15
Police Quest 3	$34
Pools of Darkness	$38
Prince of Persia	$28
Rise of the Dragon	$34
Search for the King	$37
Secret of Monkey Island	$38

Elvira 2 Jaws Cerberus	$39
Eye of the Beholder	$39
Eye of the Beholder 2	$38
Faery Tale Adventure	$31
Federation	$34
Four Crystals of Trazere	$32
Gatewy Savage Frontier	$32
Hard Nova	$32
Heart of the Dragon	$34
Hero's Quest 2	$34
Hillsfar	$12

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Barbarian 2	$29
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Battle Bound	$27
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Blockout	$28
Brain Blaster	$28
Bride of the Robot	$28
Budokan	$26

AMIGA SIMULATION

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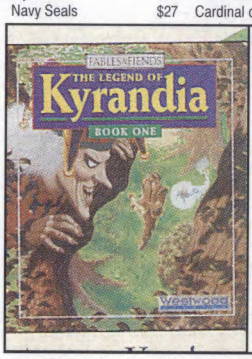
A10 Tank Killer	$34
A10 Tank Killer Enhncd	$34
Aces of the Pacific	$42
Armour Geddon	$29
ATAC	$29
Battle Command	$26
Birds of Prey	$32
Blue Angels	$15
Blue Max Aces Grt War	$34
Cardinal of the Kremlin	$32



In **'THE LEGEND OF KYRANDIA'** you travel in a land where magic is real. A land of dark and mysterious forests, sleeping dragons, breath-taking beauty, and secrets to reveal. Features realistic animation, VGA graphics, elegant point and click interface, and an orchestrated soundtrack. **$35**

Never Ending Story 2	$24
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Ork	$29
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Paperboy 2	$27
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Pitfighter	$22
Plague	$28
Power Drift	$28
Power Drome	$18
Predator 2	$15
Prehistorik	$29
Projectyle	$28
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Shadow Beast 3 w/shirt	$34
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F29 Retaliator	$34
FA18 Interceptor	$18
Falcon	$34
Falcon Mssn Disk 1 or 2	$19
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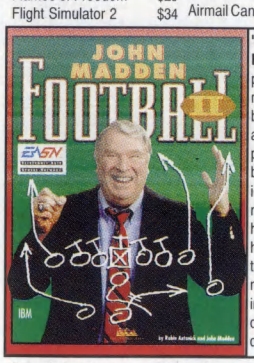

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